This document details what you need to know to play Solitaire on BridgeBase Online. The document contains some stuff that will be familiar to regular users of BridgeBase but the stuff is included to give new users a better chance to understand the concepts being presented.

Document sections are:

- Overview

- BridgeBase Website

- Scoring Options

- The Lobby

- Serving a Table

- Robots

- Buying Robots

- Serving a Solitaire Table

- That's It

Please read the BridgeBase Online Getting Started document that is available on the VBA Website on the Virtual Bridge page if you are new to Online Bridge.

Also, if you want some training in how to play, just call up the VBA and we will help you arrange a training session with us.

Finally, if you have no experience with BBO and are planning to play some games, then BBO Solitaire is a good place to start. Get a friend to help you purchase the Robots and guide you through a few hands to get the feel of the environment.

Then you can practice playing BBO at home with this document and the BridgeBase Online Getting Started document.

After an evening or two getting used to how things work, you will be well prepared to play with your friends. If they are experienced users, you can impress them with your ability to handle the software.

Overview

Bridge Base Online is a free service offered to bridge players everywhere. You need to download and install the program before you can play bridge online or use the engine which will automatically display Bridge Movies and BridgeBase VuGraph. To do this simply go to:

www.bridgebase.com

BridgeBase presents frequent "VuGraph" broadcasts of live matches from around the world and they are enhanced by expert commentary. The ABF makes use of this capability to display some of its international fixtures. For instance, Australian participation in the recent 2005 Far East Championships is available on:

www.abf.com.au/events/overseas/pabfc/2005.html

Bridge Movies are used extensively as teaching aids and will be the standard for developing interactive teaching software in the future. Check out the public PCs in the VBA which provide examples of this software which you can use at any time.

The online bridge service runs 24/7 and rarely drops below 100 concurrent tables in play in the main bridge club. The member community is large (100,000+), active and multilingual.

BBO is a business and offers ACBL-Sanctioned club games as well as the occasional advertisement. To check the games out go to:

www.acbl.org

There is also a second major online bridge service – this is OKBridge. This is not a free service but it offers a valid service. It has a ratings system which provides the means to filter your opponents and get the right standard of game. This service is particularly useful to experienced players who want to play against a good standard of opposition.

To find out about OKBridge just ask senior VBA members. If they are not a member of OKBridge they can point you to someone who is who can assist with information about the service.

Because of the addition of Robots to BBO, you can now logon and play solitaire if you have paid the Robots fee.

BridgeBase Website

The BridgeBase Website offers online bridge and a lot of other interactive and support facilities. If you go to the parent site you can then navigate the various features and learn about what the software provides. Just go to:
www.bridgebase.com

Amongst the available features and types of activity available are:

1. Volunteers are usually online to help with questions and problems. When you are logged on to BridgeBase, you will notice that some names are highlighted in yellow – these are support volunteers who are willing to take queries from participants.

2. Authorized members can organize duplicate IMP/MP/Totalpoint tournaments (Individuals and Pairs). They usually see well over 100 tournaments each day, each organized and run by one of these Tourney Directors. A few are authorised to run Pay Tournaments.

3. Any member can organize a two-table team match (IMP, BAM, or Totalpoint scoring). Hundreds of team matches are run each day. When Victoria can get other states and clubs to join the online world, we can organise interstate and interclub matches.

4. Any member can open a table for duplicate or rubber play, either with strangers or friends. Duplicate results are achieved by comparing scores to other tables. Thousands are opened each day.

5. There are several private and public clubs on BBO. Some are organized by language, others by skill. The typical private club regularly offers free tournaments for its members.

6. Any member can open a partnership-bidding room and have BBO generate hands for practice bidding. Members can also open teaching tables, controlling up to 4 seats, and (optionally) uploading specific deals.

7. Any member can open a chat room -- they make it easy to present hands to the room.

8. Discussion boards of various topics (forums.bridgebase.com). There are also methods for EMail contact – check the site for details.

Scoring Options

The types of games and scoring methods that are on offer include:

Duplicate Matchpoints
Duplicate IMPS
Rubber Bridge
Duplicate Tournaments
Team Matches

Most of the time you select either Duplicate Matchpoints or Duplicate IMPS depending on your preferred method for the day which you and your tablemates are happy with.

When you finish playing a hand, a score is immediately posted and added to your total.

Hands are added to the hand pool all of the time and are left for a reasonable time but not too long. If you are the first to play a given hand, your score will initially be zero for that hand.

However, as any table plays a hand you have played in the current session, the hand is instantly MatchPointed or Imped and your running score updated. That is why your session score is regularly being updated.

When you are playing and you lose and gain a player, it is common practice for the Table Owner to reset the running total to zero.

When you are playing that the scoring method you select does make a difference not only to you but to others. If you select either of the following methods:
Duplicate MPs
Duplicate IMPs
remember that the scores you generate will be added to a Virtual Travelling Scoresheet. Your score will count for other players for that board. This means that if you are really experimenting and trying to see what GIB does when you do crazy things, you really should use one of the other scoring methods – Total Points or Rubber.

Solitaire Issues

A special problem for Solitaire play is that you should not select Duplicate MPs or Duplicate IMPs as the scoring method.
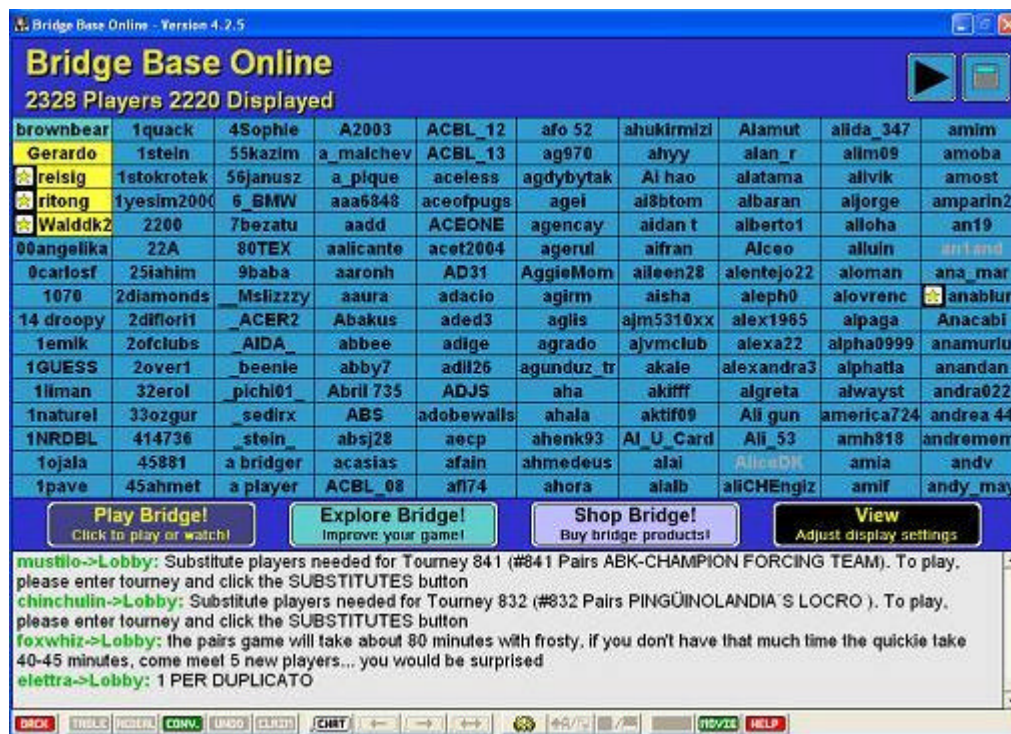
This is because you are not allowed to abort a hand once started because you are effectively joining a competition. This means that you cannot abort a boring hand once it has been started. This is hopeless when playing Solitaire.

The software achieves this by greying out the Redeal button on the playing toolbar which is the only way to abort a hand.

Total Points is the recommended Scoring Option for Solitaire but you can choose others.

The Lobby

The Lobby is the main BridgeBase Screen. When you log on you are taken to the Lobby and everything happens from there. The screen shot below was taken at 9:30AM on a Friday.
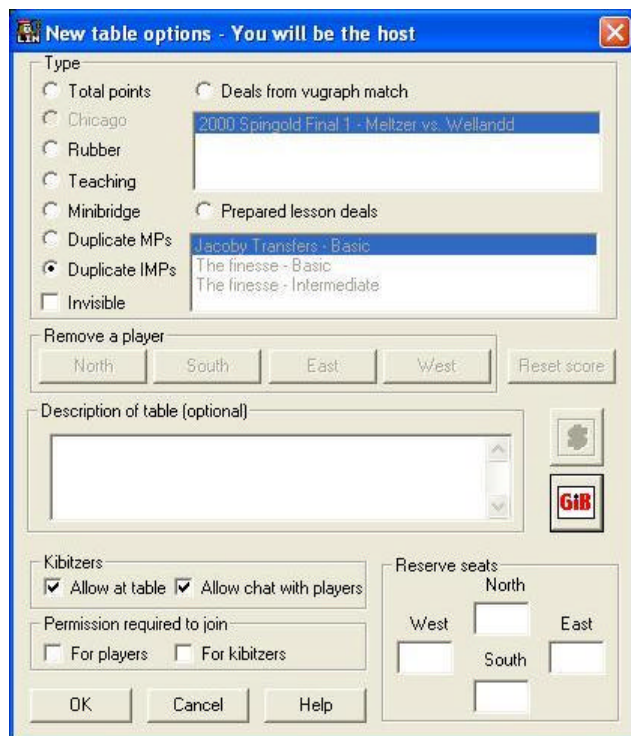

Key features are:

1. Players List. Shows all current users. The Arrow top-right scrolls pages of players.

2. Chat Log. Basically always there. Shows who is talking. In the Lobby you see all public chat but at a table only the stuff that relates to you is shown.

3. Toolbar. There is always a toolbar on the bottom of the screen which allows you to perform common actions. The Help Button is useful for new players. The Chat Button is used all the time to talk to people. The Back Button is very important – it sends you back to the previous screen you were on – this is how you leave a table or a function without quitting BridgeBase.
   The gear wheel is for your playing options.

4. Play Bridge Button. Provides access to the Main Bridge Club and online tournaments etc.

5. Explore Bridge Button. Provides access to Partnership Bidding, Chat Rooms, Bridge Base Standard, Learn to Play Bridge etc. These are interactive features other than normal online bridge tables.

6. View Button allows you to make minor adjustments to what you see in the Lobby List and how the display is realised. Try it out by changing the options.

There are now a lot of places where there are context-sensitive menus like in a lot of other windows applications. Try the right mouse-click to see where you can get shortcut menus.

Serving a Table

This is what you have to do if you want to create a new table in the Main Bridge Club. After starting a Serve, you will get the New Table Options screen.

When this appears, you set the options as follows:

1. Click an option button for the scoring type you want to use. ***Do not*** use Duplicate MPs or Duplicate Imps for Solitaire – Total Points is simplest. See the Scoring Options section above for the reasons.

2. Invisible Checkbox. This makes the table invisible to other BridgeBase users except those who have seats reserved. May use this during training.

3. Kibitzers. You can specify whether you want to allow online kibitzers and whether they are allowed to chat to the players.

4. Permission Required To Join. You can specify whether players and/or kibitzers must ask permission before they join the table.

5. Description of the table. Allows the world to read what the table is about. This is optional.

6. Reserve Seats. Always fill this in if you are reserving for specific players. This means you should know each others usernames when preparing a set game on BridgeBase for a four.

7. Use the GIB Button to set up to 3 seats at the table as GIB Robots instead of real players. See the *Robots* section which follows for details.

At any time during play, the Table Owner can press the Table Button in the toolbar to bring up this screen to reset any option. This is most commonly done to Reset Scores when a new player arrives at an existing table. Rarely, the Table Owner may remove a player from the table.

Robots

This is an important new feature of BridgeBase Online and allows you to play either on your own or with others but to use instances of the bridge playing computer program GIB instead of other players.

This was a free service during a trial period, but there is a charge for the service which started October 1st 2005. The charge is US$3 per month for the table Host with a US$10 minimum as a top-up fee when you recharge your BBO Account.

This means that a regular group of players can nominate a regular Host who must purchase GIB for the group. Personally, I am happy to just call the $3 a month a charge I am happy to pay to help support such a terrific service whose core activities are free.

When you start a table, click the GIB button during set-up. This lets you set up to 3 seats as GIB Players instead of people. You are not allowed to set up all 4 seats as GIB players – this would be fairly pointless and a waste of BBO Resources.

The first way you would want to use this is for partnership practice. When you start a table, specify that you and your partner occupy North and South, say. Then specify that GIB occupies the East/West chairs.

Now you and your partner can play at your own pace and even take breaks without inconveniencing your opponents – computers don't get impatient…

The other main way you would use the service is for solitaire. Place yourself in one seat and GIB Players in the other three. Doing this is the equivalent of logging on to Jack or any other bridge program and playing against the computer – this is, in fact, the default mode of operation of Jack when you start it up.

To get the feel of doing this, you can try it out on the public computer at the rear of the VBA that has Jack installed.

If the fee turns out to be reasonable, then this feature will provide a way for travelling bridge players to while away the time at Internet Cafes playing online bridge while they are waiting for…
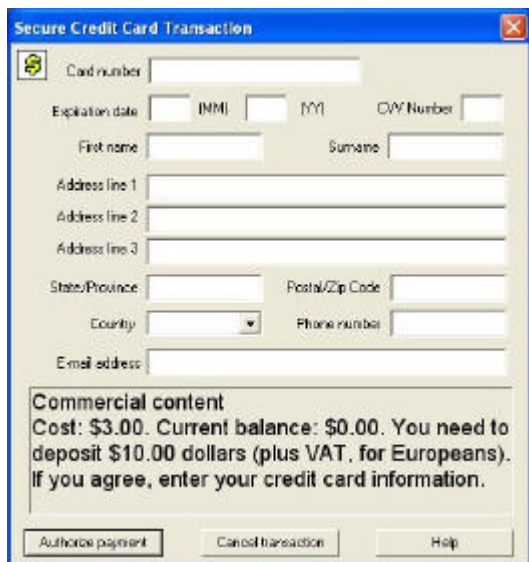
Buying Robots

At the time of writing, the ability to use Robots is being sold at $3 per month per host.

In order to purchase the service as a host that wants to use Robots, do the following.

1. LogOn to BBO

2. Select *Shop Bridge* from the central toolbar.

3. Select *Purchase BBO$ Bridge using Paypal* or *Purchase BBO$ Bridge using SWREG*
    from the menu. This lets you add money to your account to purchase GIB Robots and to buy stuff from
    their shop. See below for a sample Credit Card Dialog.

4. When you have money in your BBO Account, select *Purchase bridge products* from the
    Shop Bridge Menu..

5. Select *Rental* from the next list. This may change a little as the service is evolving so select the most
    likely Usual Suspect if the name has changed…
    When I wrote this, the Description for Rental was:
    ### GIB – robots that play bridge.

6. Select *Use GIB for the next 30 days*. You can do it for a week but trust me, just risk the whole Three
    Bucks…

If you have decided to purchase BBO$ using a credit card, you will be presented with the following screen:
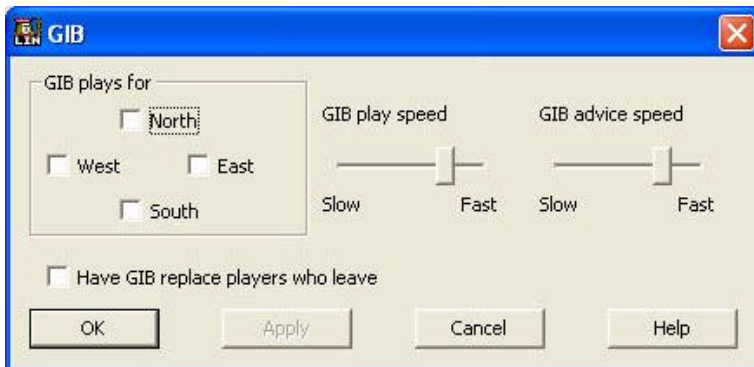

We have all seen one of these. Just fill it and pay your money. If this is OK then read the rest of the document.

When your rental runs out you go through the same procedure again. Sometimes, there will be enough money in
your BridgeBase account to extend the rental. If there is, a dialog will ask you if you want to use another $3 for
another month of GIB. Say yes and the rental extension will be deducted.

If there is not enough for another month, you will have to top up your BBO$ Account.

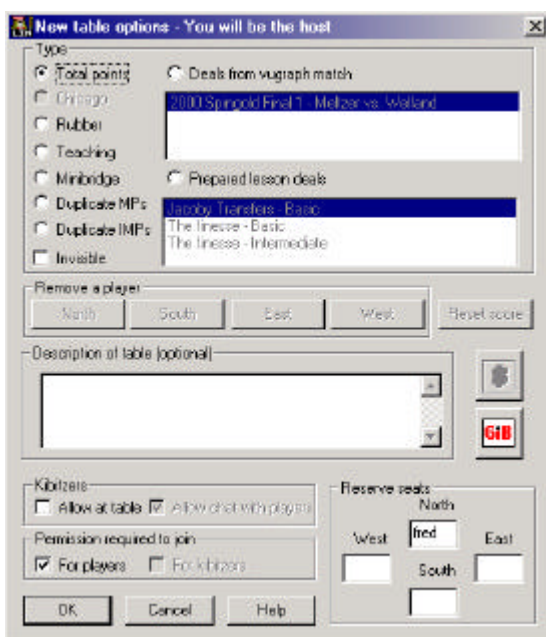# Serving a Solitaire Table

This shows how you create a Solitaire Table having paid the money for a GIB Licence. The special screen you will see on the way is below.

Carry out the following steps

1. Serve a Table as detailed in the *Serving a Table* section above.

2. Type your username in the North Seat for Reserved Seats.

3. Press the GIB Button on the *Serving a Table* screen.

4. The screen above will be presented.

5. Click the other 3 seats to set them as GIB Players.
   If you have set yourself as North, then specify West, East and South as GIB.

6. Click the Option which says have GIB Players replace those who leave.

Click OK to accept the GIB settings. You will be returned to the Serving A Table screen.

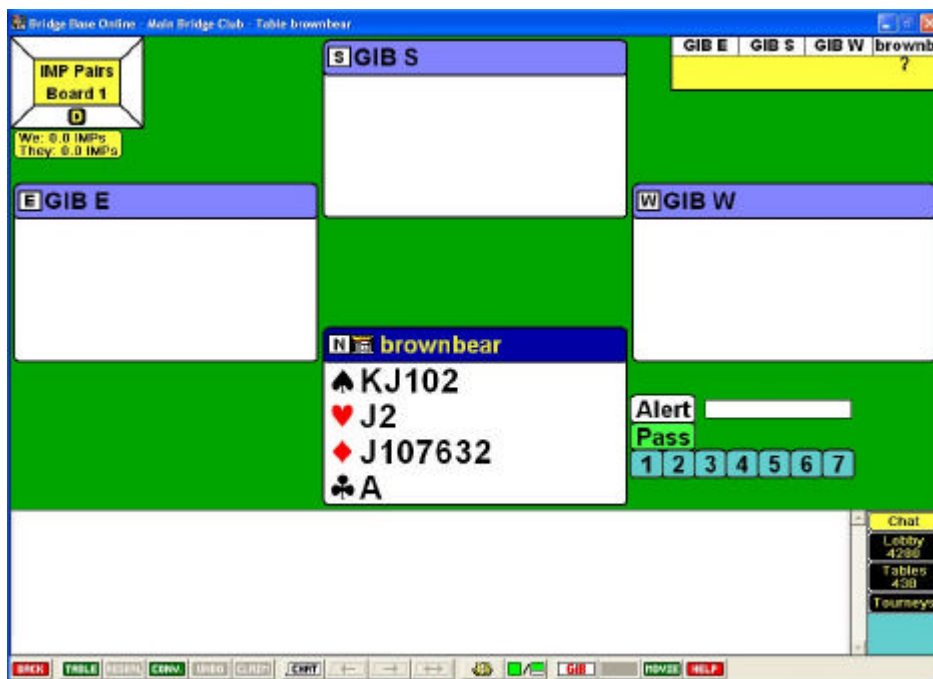Finally your table is ready. Click OK and then…

That's It

After that just play.

You will see a screen like the one below with you in one chair and GIB Robots in the other three. You can bid and play at your own pace in pretty much the same way as you would using any bridge playing software such as Jack.

BBO Solitaire won't have the same feature set as the purchased software applications but you have the advantage of being able to play anywhere you have access to a computer with an internet connection. As long as you can install BBO if it is missing, then off you go.

If you are considering getting a bridge playing software application, you can try out BBO Solitaire and see if this kind of bridge is really for you.

Remember when you are playing that the scoring method you select does make a difference not only to you but to others. If you select either of the following methods:

      Duplicate MPs
      Duplicate IMPs

the scores you generate will be added to a Virtual Travelling Scoresheet. Your score will count for other players. This means that if you are really experimenting and trying to see what GIB does when you do crazy things, you really should use one of the other scoring methods – Total Points or Rubber.

Finally, you will have noticed in the scenario above that if you replace South in the set-up above with your favourite partner, you have just created a first class practice environment.

The advantage of practising with Robots as opponents is that they will not get impatient if you have a long discussion with your partner.