

# PLAYING ON BRIDGE BASE ONLINE: A ROAD MAP

[www.bridgebase.com](http://www.bridgebase.com)

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According to a review of Bridge Base Online (BBO), entitled “The Promised Land” and published in the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* a few years ago, “Fred Gitelman has long been recognized as the creative force behind much of the premium bridge-related technology and software available on the market today.” The writer went on to say that, “The technical achievements and breadth of this site make it a must-see.” Indeed, this site offers many options for new players.

## 1. Login

BBO can be accessed after downloading the free software at [www.bridgebase.com](http://www.bridgebase.com). If you are a new member, when the “Login” box comes up, you simply click on the “New Member” button at which time you choose your user name and password. As you come on to the site, you see an alphabetical list of all players on the site at that time. The people online best able to help you when there are problems are in yellow, just below your login name. There are other symbols and colors to designate certain players online. This is covered in the online **Help** (far right of the toolbar). If you are not opening a table or playing in a tournament, but want to kibitz or use some of the special features of the site, you still must login.

## 2. Opening a table

You have four options to choose from after login: “Play Bridge,” “Explore Bridge,” “Shop Bridge” and “View: adjust setting displays.” Let’s start by setting up a table. Click on the button, “Play Bridge” and head to the Main Bridge Club where you will see “Start a New Table.” Click on this and a dialog box will open, giving you several options. You may allow kibitzers and chat as required.

## 3. User Profile

When you log in, your name is at the top left of the lobby window. Click on your name to edit your profile. This allows you to change your password and other information you might want to make available to the public as well as the program for certain preferences.

## 4. Learn to Play Bridge

BBO offers software to help you refresh your game or learn more. Go to “Explore Bridge” when you log in and you will find “Learn to Play Bridge.” Parts 1 and 2 of the program were written by Fred for the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation. The programs will introduce you to bridge based on the Standard American Yellow Card (SAYC). Part 1 deals more with bidding and declarer play while part 2 introduces you to defense and competitive bidding, including the Unusual NT and Michaels. This is an ideal introduction to bridge since it allows the new player to work through the programs at his own pace.

Also available in “Explore Bridge” is a demo of *Bridge Master 2000*, where you can play up to six deals in each of the five levels of expertise. Beginner and intermediate players should probably not venture beyond level three. The program, as well as hundreds of additional deals, is available at BBO (see “Shop Bridge” in main lobby).

## 5. Explore BIL (Beginners and Intermediates Lounge)

The BIL is a club on BBO that recently introduced a youth membership for 6 to 15 year olds who receive specialized tutoring as they compete in team matches. With this initiative, the BIL now boasts a membership ranging from ages 6 to 94. This private haven, amidst over 6000+ players and kibitzers on BBO on any one given day, now offers free teaching sessions for all members. There are groups and one-on-one individual mentoring sessions, teaching and competitive tournaments, team league matches, bridge movies in the BBO Lecture Hall, a weekly Gazette sent out to all members, ‘Think with Fred’ sessions, ‘Listen to the Experts’ as they comment on bridge hands and more! With bridge teachers, including myself, volunteering their time, in any given week there is up to 60 hours of activities on this site. For further information on the BIL, contact Maureen at [hall@timaru.com](mailto:hall@timaru.com).

## 6. Partnership Bidding

Another interactive bridge tool on BBO is “Partnership Bidding” which is also found by clicking on the “Explore Bridge” tab. Upon opening a table here, a dialog box opens allowing you to practice bidding with random deals or constrained deals, limiting either or both North and South hands, specifically defining up to six hand types by distribution, HCP or both. If you want to practice with GIB (artificial intelligence known as “Goren in a Box”), an add-on for a small fee, this can be arranged. Partnership Bidding is a very popular way to improve your game.

## 7. Vugraph and ACBL Tournaments

Each month BBO offers several Vugraph shows of tournaments worldwide. Check <http://online.bridgebase.com/vugraph/schedule.php> for upcoming events. BBO offers Vugraph shows of most major tournaments, and the site has in the past offered premier ACBL events such as the Spingold Teams, the Vanderbilt Teams and the World Zonal Teams for the WBF.

Lastly for now — as the site has so many wonderful facets that this article could turn into a book — there are daily ACBL tournaments, at a fee of \$1 per person. Two 0-299 tournaments are currently held on BBO just after 8:00 pm and 10:20 pm EST. What a great way to enjoy bridge with one of your friends – and you can actually win masterpoints online!

As you can see, there are many ways in which new players can participate and learn on BBO and often at no extra cost. Check with your bridge teacher for other opportunities. A teacher can be creative by bringing large groups on to BBO (up to eight or more), and with the help of an assistant, hold a team game with running commentary. In my experience as a FIFTH CHAIR volunteer ([www.fifthchair.org](http://www.fifthchair.org)), this is a format which is competitive but first and foremost, a great deal of fun for all.

BBO has an excellent HELP section in case I have missed any of your questions, and that tab can be found at the bottom of the screen in red to the far right. If your question is not answered in the very thorough HELP section, just email [support@bridgebase.com](mailto:support@bridgebase.com)  
Happy Bridge on BBO 📧