

I'd like to announce and welcome our two new Virtual Game directors: Jody Shapiro and Margie Butler. They have also recently become new certified club directors. Thank you, Jody and Margie, for joining our director staff. On that note, players can see a schedule of our games, the directors and their telephone numbers on our website under SCHEDULE at

<https://vcbridge.org/schedule>.

If you are new to Bridge Base Online (BBO), you can also find directions and our game schedule on our website's home page, [www.vcbridge.org](http://www.vcbridge.org). If you need more help, give Mark (Eckhout) a call at 707-287-6569 or me.

**BBO TIP OF THE WEEK:** Robots??? Say what?? Some of you may have seen a pair of robots in your game or have a robot "pop in" to replace your partner temporarily. Here's what's happening.

Scenario 1. Many of you might have noticed a player at your table that seems to have gone missing for an inordinate amount of time. Tick-tock goes the play clock. You call the director (little blue square with the 3 white lines) and report it OR the system notices the person is off-line and automatically notifies the director. The director comes to your table, usually notifying the table that they'll wait a little longer giving the player a chance to log back in. Sometimes they'll ask the player's partner to call the missing player to see what's happening. If the missing player is able to log back in within that short time frame, they will be seated automatically back at their table.

More tick-tock. If the player hasn't returned, the director will "substitute" the missing player with either a robot or an outside player from the ACBL international sub pool. Directors usually like to opt for a ROBOT as the robot is instantly up-to-date and explains all their bids, unlike a real person. Once the missing player gets back on-line, they will automatically be placed at their original table at the start of the next hand. Often the director will add a little extra time to the round to account for the delay.

More scenarios (to be continued).

Warm regards,

Rose Buckley\_805-659-9223

8/10/20

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Are you ALERT! Do you ALERT? Our virtual games are a little different and take a bit of getting used to. On BBO, we must alert OUR OWN bids. How do we do that?

1. If we're alert when it's our bid and we see our bid selection box pop up, we'll see a line just below the list of bids and just to the right of an "Alert" button. BEFORE we select a conventional bid, we click on the "Alert" button, and jot down a short explanation of the alert on that line. I also strongly suggest [you watch this video tutorial](#) demonstrating the process.

The following bids should be alerted:

- A "Transfer" such as a 2 diamond response to partner's opening 1NT as a transfer to hearts.
- An opening 1NT bid that promises something other than 15-17 points (no need to alert a 15-17 point 1NT opener).
- A response to a 4NT bid which asks for Aces (Blackwood) or key cards (such as Roman Key Card 1430).
- A forcing 1NT response to partner's opening 1 of a major bid.
- Any convention on the convention card marked in red which must also be alerted when we play in person.

Also, in our explanation, we shouldn't use the name of our convention. Instead, we describe what our bid means. For example, instead of writing "Drury," we write "Limit raise."

When in doubt, ALERT! We can alert more often since ONLY the opponents see our alert, NOT our partner. Let's try to start developing this new habit.

2. OOPS, we forgot and clicked on our bid before alerting / announcing it. Not too late. We'll see our bid show up in the auction "box". Click on it right away. The bid will show up on the upper right with an EXPLAIN box and a short line below it. We'll put our little explanation there.

3. Lastly, we can ALWAYS ask an opponent what their bid means (and they can ask us what our bid means). Again, click on an opponent's bid in the auction "box". An explain "box" will again pop up visible to the opponent that made that bid. The opponent will write a short explanation. Sorry - we can't do that with our partner's bid. So, if you see an explain box pop up, one of your opponents has requested you to explain your bid. Please comply by filling in an explanation. To dismiss an explanation box, click on the white region at the top of the box.

4. CAUTION! Do NOT use the "table chat line" to comment on the bidding (or play if you are a defender). ALL the folks at the table can see it and it will give unauthorized information (just like at the club) to our partner.

It's so nice to see you joining in on our games. It's fun to play with you.

If you are new to Bridge Base Online (BBO), you can [find directions](#) and [our game schedule](#) on our website. If you need more help, give Mark (Eckhout) a call at 707-287-6569 or me.

BBO TIP OF THE WEEK: Sorry, I ran on about "Alerts." I'll continue with more "Robot" tips next week. By the way, if a robot is at our table, we can always click on its bid even if the robot is our partner. It is prefilled with the explanation.

See you at the table 😊

Warm regards,

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8/17/20

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I'm so sorry this is late. Did a Zoom wine-tasting last Sunday with friends and ... totally forgot my newsletter until Joanne Bowen reminded me yesterday. My apologies.

You may have noticed some changes over the past weeks. One is that you can now see hand records for all our virtual club games when you go to ACBL Live. Another, starting last week, is that you will receive more masterpoints when you play in our Open game that has a concurrently running limited game, such as our Saturday game which has the 499er game running at the same time. ACBL is working hard to provide better features all the time.

And here's a SHOUT OUT to all of you bridge newcomers! Come to our TUESDAY NEWCOMERS 12:15 game! You don't need to be a member of ACBL. You will be playing with your friends – maybe those of you who played together in RC's game or Illona's game or took lessons with Don /

Raeann / Rose or your social bridge group. If you don't have a partner, put your name in the game's partnership desk. We miss our regular newcomers and welcome new newcomers.

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BBO TIP OF THE WEEK: More on ROBOTS we see at the game. Last time I discussed Robots that pop into a seat at a game when a real player disappears.

Scenario 2. Robot PAIRS. Either on the 1<sup>st</sup> round or when we change the rounds, we'll come to a table where our opponents are two robots! The director put them there to fill a 1/2 table. Why robots and not real outside subs? Sometimes they are easier to deal with than a set of persnickety subs that keep popping in and out of the game. BBO does not check the masterpoint limits for subs so an expert sub can be playing in our limited games. [However, a new feature may come soon where directors can check their masterpoints.]

Robots pairs are very good players and, as ACBL has verified, they often win. BBO robots have a cajillion master points. To ensure they DON'T win, directors had to give all robot pairs AVG on every hand that they did better than AVG. This week ACBL announced that Robot Pairs will now be disqualified from receiving any masterpoints. They may look like they are doing well on your game History on BBO but after ACBL gets the game, they overlook robot pairs in all the rankings.

Thanks to all the folks that have written me and say this newsletter is helpful. I'll continue doing it as long as you still enjoy it

See you at the table 😊

Warm regards,

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8/24/20

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Heads up! ACBL has announced a special one-day event for our Virtual Club games (BBO) on Labor Day Monday. That's September 7th, not this coming Monday. Same price (\$6). More masterpoints awarded. Hope to see you at our Monday game. Don't forget it's at 11:55 am. Since it's an open game, everyone can play even if you are not an ACBL member.

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**BBO TIP OF THE WEEK:** Continuing on about our friends, the robots. You can see what system they play by clicking the Help button on BBO. Then select "Robot's System" on the pull-down menu. Inside that brief description is a "here" link to a detailed description of their treatments.

But if you don't feel like reading it, here's a "basics" synopsis: It plays Standard American 5-card Major system adding in the 2/1 tweek. 15-17 NT with Stayman and transfers. Other common conventions are Fourth Suit Forcing (fsf) to game, New Minor Forcing (NMF), Roman Key Card Blackwood (0314), Reverse Drury. Michaels cue bid and Unusual No Trump (UNT). Jacoby 2NT. Jordan 2NT. Take-out doubles through 4H, negative, support and responsive doubles.

After 1H-2H->2S or 1S-2S->2NT is a short suit game try (see writeup) - any other bid (except 3 of the major) is a long suit game try. After a NT opener in a competitive auction, it uses Cappelletti and Lebensohl. Carding: When partner makes the opening lead, standard carding. It ignores all other of our discards and carding.

Why do robots win so often? First of all, it never forgets a card played. On defense, instead of using rules, it simulates hands based on the auction using double dummy analysis and picks the best alternative.

Robots are handy but can be irksome at times. A fellow bridge player told me that "they lie a lot" in their descriptions. And I've had experience with them going off into ether-land – especially after I do a game try. I'm still learning how to work with them – much like with my other partners. It's a process.

See you at the table 😊

Warm regards,

Rose Buckley

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8/31/20