



29th November 2021

Covid Advisory No 21 Face to Face and Online Bridge

We appreciate everyone is fed up with Covid-19 negatively impacting our lives. There is a chorus calling that we be allowed to get on with our lives. Whether we agree or disagree with the rules they are the rules that dictate our behaviour.

At 11.59pm on 2 December the Protection Framework, aka Traffic Light system, comes into effect. Interpretation of the Framework has been challenging. Getting a direct response from the Ministry of Health and/or the Department of the Prime Minister has not been forthcoming. They keep referring us to the website and telling us they are working at pace and more information will be released shortly.

We are led to believe that bridge clubs and usual bridge sessions will be considered a social gathering, whereas tournaments will be considered an event. The difference is due to the focus of the latter on attendance from the broader public, where a club involves getting together with friends one regularly socialises with.

How long Covid-19 will impact our lives is unknown. How long we will have to live with the 'Traffic Light' protocols is unknown. The implication of the just announced South African variant is unknown. So, lots of unknowns.

All, of these unknowns bring into question how bridge is going to be run in New Zealand, at least in the short-term.

We are strong advocates for the return of 'face to face' bridge. After all, this is what players are calling for and is the very foundation of the game. The 'Traffic Light' system allows for clubs and tournament play under certain conditions. Here are the rules:

Club Bridge under the traffic lights

Red

- Clubs can run sessions with up to 25 tables of players with a My Vaccine Pass with 1m distancing (whichever is the lesser) per defined space.
- Clubs can run sessions with up to 6 tables of players if there are players without a My Vaccine Pass with 1m distancing (whichever is the lesser) per defined space.

Orange

- Clubs can run sessions with unlimited numbers of players with a My Vaccine Pass.
- Clubs can run sessions with up to 12 tables of players if there are players without a My Vaccine Pass with 1m distancing (whichever is the lesser) per defined space.

Green

- Clubs can run sessions with unlimited numbers of players with a My Vaccine Pass.
- Clubs can run sessions with up to 25 tables of players if there are players without a My Vaccine Pass with 1m distancing (whichever is the lesser) per defined space.

Bridge Tournaments under the traffic lights

Red

- Clubs can run tournaments with up to 25 tables of players with a My Vaccine Pass with 1m distancing (whichever is the lesser) per defined space.
- Players without a My Vaccine Pass are not able to play.

Orange

- Clubs can run tournaments with unlimited numbers of players with a My Vaccine Pass.
- Players without a My Vaccine Pass are not able to play.

Green

- Clubs can run tournaments with unlimited numbers of players with a My Vaccine Pass.
- Clubs can run tournaments with up to 25 tables of players if there are players without a My Vaccine Pass with 1m distancing (whichever is the lesser) per defined space.

So, you can observe that with vaccination certificates 'face to face' bridge with little imposition. Without a vaccination certificate club and tournament bridge is a lot more problematic.

Because of the controls and limitations, it is appropriate that we provide an environment for 'online' bridge to run as an alternative. Evidence tells us a sector of our playing population are reluctant to return to 'face to face' sessions but want to continue playing. Equally we do not want to cancel more tournaments. If we do not provide an online option player will either leave the game and maybe never return or migrate and play elsewhere, such as Australia.

Over the past few days, the Board has considered and agreed to the award of masterpoints for scheduled club sessions on a trial basis through until 31 March 2022.

Our Regulations Committee has drafted some interim changes to the regulations to facilitate this. A copy of those amendments is attached to this bulletin.

While we won't have considered every aspect at this point the key message is that it is a trial. There will be learnings from this which will be considered at the end of March 2022 when the trial is evaluated.

Some key points that your Club will need to consider if you wish to participate in the trial:

- Masterpoints will only be offered for existing scheduled club sessions that are moved online commencing Wednesday 1st December 2021.
- Only those sessions conducted using the "RealBridge" platform will qualify for Masterpoints.
- Clubs will need to make arrangements with RealBridge to become a client club and would need to be aware of, and take responsibility for, payment of any hosting fees charged by RealBridge.
- Clubs will need to ensure the smooth and automated upload of masterpoint files in consultation with their Scoring Programme provider.

This bulletin covers club sessions only. Work is now being undertaken to enable some scheduled tournaments to be conducted on RealBridge. Details of this will be shared with you when it is finalised.

Regards
Allan Morris
Chair- NZ Bridge Inc

ONLINE BRIDGE

Clubs and Regions within New Zealand are increasingly organising bridge online using platforms such as Bridge Base Online and Real Bridge.

All bridge sessions organised by Clubs or Regions or NZ Bridge, including online bridge, come under the auspices of NZ Bridge. The Laws of Duplicate Bridge 2017 and the Regulations in the NZ Bridge Manual (12 May 2020) including the Code of Conduct apply to online bridge but with modifications that are necessary due to the differences between online bridge and face to face bridge.

Only those sessions run on the RealBridge platform are eligible for the award of masterpoints.

In addition, and for the avoidance of doubt, the following regulations also apply to online bridge;

- a) The obtaining of any information about any hand, other than information obtained by proper means during the bidding and play of the hand is prohibited. **(Law 16)**,
- b) Communication during play between partners by any means other than via the online platform is prohibited,
- c) Logging on to the online platform under more than one account simultaneously during bidding or play is prohibited, and
- d) Any breaches of a), b) or c) above is a serious transgression of the proprieties of bridge.

Masterpoints

Masterpoints will be awarded for online club sessions held at clubs not able to run face-to-face bridge because of government regulations or mandates. **(Page E6)**

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3. Online Bridge

The masterpoint scheme applies to face-to-face sessions and those online club sessions approved by NZ Bridge.

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11. Only those online club sessions run on the Realbridge platform and authorised by NZB will be eligible for the award of masterpoints.

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3. **Online Sessions**

Online sessions must be run on the RealBridge platform and supervised by a qualified director who has undertaken RealBridge training.

The Laws of Contract Bridge 2017 and NZB Regulations apply to online sessions.

Players must have an operational camera and microphone which must be always left on. They must be familiar with the platform and methods used to ensure ongoing connectivity. They should ensure that they have a stable Wifi connection and are responsible for maintaining it.

It is solely the responsibility of the Club to ensure that they have the capability of downloading the results from RealBridge, uploading them to a scoring programme and forwarding the masterpoint files in a timely fashion.

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