



Proposed approach to resumption of bridge club sessions

Message from ABF President:

The ABF is the national administrative body of bridge in Australia. The ABF can only issue general advice and make recommendations, which ABF will endeavour to keep accurate and up-to-date.

NOTE: The ABF does not have any authority regarding the running of bridge clubs. It is up to the management committee of each club to plan & determine when their club will reopen, based on National & State/Territory directives, guidelines and recommendations. Clubs are also reminded that if they do not follow Federal, State or Local laws they will not be covered by the ABF Insurance.

The ABF offers clubs this document to assist and guide your specific process. It is drawn directly from the Australian Government published guidelines and information. It also explores the specifics of bridge club sessions, and offers suggestions you might consider.

The ABF will not refer to specific state or territory directives, guidelines & recommendations – because these vary across the country, and are frequently revised. It is important to recognise that each state & territory has authority regarding your health and safety in your state/territory.

Many states and territories are now directing clubs to complete and display a COVID-19 Safety Plan which sets out the process a club will implement to protect the health and safety of its members. Clubs can source all of the relevant information on their state/territory government website in preparation for reopening when the time is right.

We are all missing our face-to-face bridge, but the health and safety of all players and officials has to be the number one priority. Please be patient and stay safe.

Allison Stralow
3 June 2020



Preamble:

Attached is *“The game of bridge in the COVID-19 era”*. It contains important information which all bridge club committees need to read, discuss & understand. To summarise some critical information:

- COVID-19 is a highly infectious virus, for which there is currently no specific treatment or vaccine.
- Australia has thus far had relatively few cases and mortality. It is near-certain that there will continue to be spot outbreaks of COVID-19, and there might be a widespread increase in COVID-19 incidence.
- Bridge players comprise a significantly higher-risk subset of the population for both severe illness and mortality from COVID-19. Advancing age, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes are all major risk factors.
- Physical distancing definitely reduces the risk of transmission and is enforceable in law by state/territory directive. The distancing requirement presents a challenge to club and congress bridge.

How might your club develop a workable and legally valid plan for restarting face-to-face bridge sessions? We suggest the following items to consider and refine for your club.

Will I go to the club and play bridge today?

- Am I well? Do I have any symptoms of illness? This might be fever, respiratory symptoms, coughing, sore throat, shortness of breath. Other symptoms can include runny nose, headache, muscle or joint pains, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, loss of sense of smell, altered sense of taste, loss of appetite and fatigue.
- Have I had any recent (last 2 weeks) contact with any person who has/had such an illness?
- Have I returned from overseas in the last weeks? Or, have I had contact with a returned traveller?

If you answer YES to any of these – you MUST NOT attend the club, and you will be refused entry at the door. Any pre-paid entry fee will be forfeited.

What happens on arrival at the club?

Entry screening for all:

- a. Roster a trained club member who acts as ‘entry monitor’.
- b. Entrants read and state that they answer “no” to each question in above criteria for entry.
- c. Perform a non-contact temperature check eg <https://www.notouchthermometer.com.au/product/led-no-touch-thermometer/>
- d. Entrants go directly to the washroom and hand wash with soap and water for 20 seconds, dry with paper towel and depart the washroom through an open door



Should people wear a mask? What about disposable gloves?

The National website advises that routine wearing of face masks is not recommended. “However, some members of the public may choose to wear a mask in situations where it is not feasible to maintain physical distancing e.g. on public transport and/or if they are at increased risk of severe illness if infected (e.g. because of their age or a chronic medical condition).”

There is a cogent argument for at-risk folk (older, chronic illnesses, especially diabetes, hypertension, obesity) to wear a mask during bridge sessions. People are in a room for 3+ hours, sitting at correct physical distancing but still with increased background risk.

Clubs should refuse entry to those with recent contacts or risk of Covid 19 etc even if they are wearing a mask. Such potentially at-risk people should not be permitted to enter in the mistaken belief that their face-mask will “reduce the risk to others”.

Disposable gloves might suit some clubs and/or members – but gloves would need to be safely removed and disposed of at various junctures in the session. It is, in a practical sense, better to have free access and use of alcohol hand-rub (see below).

What about clubroom cleaning?

Clubs should source their specific state/territory guidelines for the correct process to be followed. Write these guidelines out with reference to the specifics of bridge games – preparation for a session, clean up after a session. Consider the table & cover, playing cards and boards, bidding boxes & slips, pens, tables & chairs, door handles, bathrooms, refreshments zone (see below).

Consider appointing a small subcommittee to write and maintain your guide, and to upskill & roster members and/or paid cleaners in their duties.

What might a sensible table set-up look like?

At all times clubs must adhere to correct physical distancing regulations.

- Provide alcohol gel hand rub on all tables & freely in the club. It should be used at start & end of each round, and freely at other times e.g. after a cough or sneeze. *Note that proper handwashing should be encouraged also: it is cheap and proven to reduce COVID-19 transmission.* Alcohol gel is more convenient & saves time.
- Bidding: use paper bidding slips with own pen *or* players carry their own labelled bidding box from table to table & take it home with them. These might be loaned by the club or players may choose to purchase their own.
- Consider implementing a bridge start-up phase: players bring their own tablet/phone/laptop/iPad and play a BBO session seated with partner against opponents & move each round.
- Does a bridge table perspex shield make it legal and safe to sit closer than current physical distancing regulations? Club need to check your state/territory regulations. The ABF is unable to provide a recommendation because the issue is quite complex. For one shield example, see http://www.trumpsuitbridge.com/Products-detail?product_id=220

- Refreshments: players bring their own cups and pre-packed personal snack. No common biscuit barrel etc. Refreshment area is managed by a rostered & trained club member – to dispense coffee, tea, sugar & milk, minimise the risk of cross-contamination & ensure a thorough clean before, during & after play.
- Hand records: print off and Director/volunteer distributes these to departing players.
- Clean up after the session: this should be rostered, structured & not left to spontaneous volunteers. It must adhere to your written guidelines. Remind players to take home their bidding boxes, pens, refreshments etc



Disclaimer: The ABF reiterates that this is a general guide, and that the ABF has no authority over individual clubs and their actions. At all times adhere to national and state/territory directives, regulations & advice. If in doubt, delay action and seek a definitive answer. Failure to adhere might result in loss of cover under the ABF national insurance policy.

We will update this guide as further information becomes available.