

Robert Todd / July 5, 2022 / Guest Columnists

## Tips for Playing Bridge Online – Stay Focused and Play Your Best

To be a consistently good bridge player requires more than just bridge knowledge or even good bridge judgment. A large part of bridge is about focus and psychology. In many ways, your ability to keep (or regain) your focus in stressful situations is more important than your bridge knowledge.

As a bridge teacher I often find myself working with my students on bridge concepts (or even their bidding systems/agreements). But as a professional player, that plays with students of many backgrounds and skill bridge levels, I find that one thing almost every player needs is help with the psychology of the game. This is true for all types of bridge – in-person and online.



Robert Todd

When it comes to playing bridge online, we face a more difficult set of challenges than we do when we're playing in-person. Of course, when playing bridge online there are often distractions with things going on around you – either in your home, coffee shop or wherever you may find yourself playing bridge. But there are other aspects of playing bridge online that are important for you to deal with properly. Let's look at some of the things you can do better:

**The Clock** – When you're playing online don't get too focused on the time remaining. Most players focus on the clock ticking down in the corner of their screen and let it distract them from playing or defending the hand. 2-3 minutes is a much longer time than you think, so don't panic! *Relax and play the cards the best you can. Don't let the ticking clock pressure you into making bad choices or misclicks.* If you run out of time, the director will make whatever adjustments need to be done.

**History** – One of the aspects of online play that is often more gratifying than in-person play is the history. You can see every card you and partner played as well as the details of what happened at each of the other tables. In many games, you also get to immediately see your result (% or IMPs). All of this is great information, but it's important for you not to spend too much time looking at it or thinking about this information while you play. So many players get focused on this data and allow it to distract them from their play. Spending time focusing on this information will only distract you and undermine your focus. Remember, the history of your play and the results at the other tables are not going anyway. You can look at them later, keep your focus on the next hand, not the previous one!

**Discussion with Partner** – When playing bridge in-person, it can be tempting to discuss previous boards in the middle of the session. This is especially true when discussing boards resulting in bad outcomes or where you and partner had a disagreement. Often these conversations distract you and partner from the next board and negatively affect your future results. Many players choose to discuss some things because they're fresh in their minds, and don't want to forget to cover them later (or just can't help themselves). If you do feel the need to discuss a board with partner in the middle of a session, you need to be careful to be constructive towards or complimentary of partner, not critical. When it comes to online and in particular using "chat" it can be very easy to have your tone misinterpreted. Even things that you mean as a compliment if read quickly can be misunderstood. It's always better to wait until the end of the session to discuss things with partner – especially if you're discussing a poor result or something you think they did wrong!

If you want to improve your online bridge results, then put some significant effort into correcting any of these bad habits you might have developed. You'll be amazed at how doing just a bit better at these will significantly improve your scores.

### About the Author

*Robert is a professional player and teacher that you'll find all over North America (and the world). He is the founder of Adventures in Bridge and you'll find him hosting events, either virtual or in-person, almost every week of the year! Robert's also the president of the ACBL Educational Foundation where he's working to build an institution to shepherd the long term good of bridge!*

19 comments on "Tips for Playing Bridge Online – Stay Focused and Play Your Best"

**Anonymous** says:

August 18, 2022 at 10:47 pm

Thank you Robert. I agree so much with you, especially because I do, and must follow some rules, but as my maths has never been that good, fortunately I also play with logic. I find that my old studies of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle do help with a bit of reasoning on how to work the play of the hand...and the more I read about bridge, the more one learns.

[Reply](#)

**Richard Luxton** says:

July 31, 2022 at 11:50 pm

YU forgot the most important one...state yr cc

[Reply](#)

**Anonymous** says:

July 31, 2022 at 7:06 pm

No should not be allowed "undo" after next person has already acted!

[Reply](#)

**Hilda Segal** says:

July 31, 2022 at 8:50 am

I cannot get any CHATS on line from my partner NOR from Opps. They can see my chat as long as I don't press Enter....PKEASE HELP ME...I miss the fun of saying WD

[Reply](#)

**Nam Yats** says:

July 30, 2022 at 8:04 pm

I have met Robert a few times on bridge cruises - he is truly AMAZING. He teaches online, on cruises and in local clubs; and a regular contributor to our monthly North American Bridge Bulletin.

[Reply](#)

**Anonymous** says:

July 30, 2022 at 7:57 pm

I agree. In principle. If, however, you are playing in a speedball tournament, it is not remotely fair for a player to delay, waste time, or play slowly. I wish the directors would penalize habitually slow pairs.

[Reply](#)

**Jeroo F. Dalal** says:

July 30, 2022 at 4:08 pm

Robert: Need a ruling please.... Online bridge... can an "undo" be accepted after the next player passes?

[Reply](#)

**Joan A Tschirki** says:

July 30, 2022 at 4:36 am

Robert do you offer playing lessons? It worked for me very well in golf! a If so price and availability. JOANm striving for Diamond Life Master. So far on my own but the last 500 I will need much help.

[Reply](#)

**bobsill** says:

July 29, 2022 at 9:02 pm

Thank you for your comments, especially related to time. Focus is very important to me also. When I play online in the living room my wife and pets distract me. I find playing in my basement den is more beneficial.

[Reply](#)

**Marge39deb** says:

July 26, 2022 at 9:48 am

I found Robert's article very interesting and instructive. I'm guilty of too much chat so will curb this in future. Thank you Robert. I tried clicking on the stars and it was thought I was being critical. Margaret Bristol

[Reply](#)

**Geoff Bard** says:

July 23, 2022 at 9:17 am

Having played Chicago with 3 friends online and at the golf club since before covid, we do not know just what standard we are. How do we find out before we risk ruining other peoples game?

[Reply](#)

**Kate M Curry** says:

July 23, 2022 at 7:31 am

I wanted to give Robert FIVE STARS but thing disappeared after pressing one! Robert talks a lot of sense and his remarks are very helpful. My late husband was a Master so I learnt a "foot of a master!" Playing on-line is fine now got used to it but regarding Chat I find it most disconcerting, even downright rude and ignorant those players (be they your partner or opponent) who comoleately ignore you throughout whole of boards! Not good Bridge etiquette - especially are people I know from our own USA Bridge Group. Learn a few manners folks - courtesy costs nothing.

[Reply](#)

**Dr. Elliot Rubinstein** says:

July 23, 2022 at 3:41 am

When playing with 'advanced' partners who don't follow bidding rules what do you do?

[Reply](#)

**Madhu Goyal** says:

July 22, 2022 at 9:57 pm

Thank you so much for these tips for playing online. It is true and I always say to other , bridge is definitely a game of 100% focus . If you loose the track of count and what played . You are doomed .

[Reply](#)

**Sheryleen Grothus** says:

July 22, 2022 at 9:18 pm

Robert, thank you for these reminders. I, for one, can sometimes get overly concerned with the clock. Having been an opponent of yours in Gatlinburg, I have tremendous respect for your game, your advice and your demeanor at the table.

[Reply](#)

**Fram** says:

July 22, 2022 at 9:12 pm

Good advice...question...should an "undo" be allowed in online bridge after the next player passes? Your ruling will be appreciated 🙏😊

[Reply](#)

**Joonster** says:

July 22, 2022 at 8:25 pm

Jackie Russell just btw, and I say this with love, (weather is a misspelling. For it is spelled whether in your case.

[Reply](#)

**Jackie Russell** says:

July 22, 2022 at 8:09 pm

I found your article helpful and can attest to the value of "focus" whether online or real.

[Reply](#)

**Anonymous** says:

July 22, 2022 at 7:43 pm

Im playing 45 years bridgeBut bridge changing in that time and now everything changed .And you are playing all time new person level different what is your system earning money or learning person bridge.Avni YILMAZ from TURKEY/ISTANBUL

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