PLAYER'S GUIDE TO STEPBRIDGE - TOURNAMENT PLAY

The English version of StepBridge (translated from the original Dutch), provides an ideal flexible platform for the running of tournaments at all levels – Club, Area, National.
StepBridge can be played on any computer/tablet/smartphone, but I strongly advise a computer (functionality on other devices can be downgraded).
(This article primarily addresses 'tournament bridge'. If playing 'casual bridge', most general conditions still apply, but with some differences – these will be detailed later).

StepBridge Registration

From the StepBridge web-site, players can initiate the registration process by providing their details.
StepBridge then issues a username/moniker, which is then emailed to the player, together with a password (some players with a hotmail account have encountered difficulties with the receipt of this email). Since this is a manual process, if considering entry to a tournament, you should allow 24 hours for the registration process.

Via the app or desktop icon, the player is then able to log-in to StepBridge. At the first log-in you need to 'create account', by providing your moniker and password (from your email reply), and these details can be saved for subsequent auto log-ins.

Set-Up

StepBridge provides the player with the standard windows toolbar, for use prior to and during the play. You are unable to actually 'see' a table in play and you can accept the default settings. The settings are self-explanatory, but you may wish to consider personalizing the following:

'Club' 'Options'

> 'Appearance' – this enables the visual and audio parameters to be amended. I would suggest you consider:

> 'Order Of Cards' – this will be your personal view of your own hand – ♠♥♦♣ or ♠♥♣♦
> 'Card Spacing' – I find the best setting is just above half-way on the slider
> 'Trump's Right' – when playing in a suit contract you can see dummy's hand with the trumps on dummy's right/your left (as is the requirement in f2f bridge), or in the sequence that you defined with the 'order of cards'
> 'Trick Counter' – I would suggest that this should be ticked.

> 'Play'

> 'Hide Bidding After Lead' – if you untick this the bidding will still show during the play. If ticked the bidding is not visible during play (the norm in f2f bridge), but can always be retrieved by pressing F3.
> 'Select Pass As Default Bid…' – leave 'unticked'

> You can ignore all the other settings until you have participated in a tournament – then re-visit.

'Club' 'Identity'

> For serious competitions you should create a convention card. You can 'choose' one of the standard cards (probably Standard Acol – but this incorporates strong '2s'), and then 'copy' it with a different name. You can then 'edit' this to your personal system.

Player Contact

You can contact any other players (assuming they're logged-on), by pressing F9, or over-writing the 'To' box at the top of the 'chat' area, or clicking on their name in the chat area. Then enter your message.

Tournaments

There are two basic types of tournament 'open' and 'closed'. The only significant difference is that with a 'closed' tournament, which is what most clubs run, you need to be a member of the club. You become a member by contacting the club membership official, who will add your moniker to the club member list. **If your name is not on the club list (i.e. not a member), in principle you cannot play in a club tournament.**

For an 'open' tournament, usually run by a national body, you need not become a member of the organization, and are **freely entitled to enter their events.**

Tournament Registration and Entry

Tables										— □ ×
Activity	Table	Type	Mode	L-	L+	Players	Total	Label	Chair	Player
[Competition]	[Lobby]					2	2		Visitor	Chris
Tn Wednesday 7pm									Visitor	Tony

| Refresh | Join Table | Serve table... | Search... | ☐ Top |

One scheduled tournament, with two players - Chris and Tony - in the General Lobby

When you enter StepBridge you are then in the 'General Lobby' (above), and you are shown a list of tournaments (activities) down the left hand side. All players in the lobby will be shown alphabetically down the right-hand-side. Tournaments should be visible 30 hours before the start. To pre-register for a tournament, highlight the tournament (at which point you are in the tournament lobby), and then press 'Info'. On this 'Tournament Information Window' enter your partner's name, and register for the tournament. You can ideally choose to 'invite' your partner (tick box) – when partner log-ins to your tournament on StepBridge, they will receive a message inviting them to play with you in the tournament (hopefully they will accept).
When actually competing in the tournament you must enter the 'tournament lobby' **at least 5 minutes prior to the scheduled start time** (this enables the Director to optimize the tournament set-up) – click on the appropriate tournament name. You then just wait for the tournament to start (any delays etc. will be communicated to you from the Director via the 'chat').

Immediately prior to the start of the tournament both you and your partner will have a message displayed asking whether you are playing with partner's system card. You can only 'accept' this, so if you want to play with your own card, just wait, and partner will eventually 'accept' your card.

Table Display

I strongly advise that you maximize the screen.
You are always positioned at the bottom of the table, irrespective of your actual compass direction.
The auction table is shown at the bottom left of the screen.
The board details are shown at the top left, and in addition the vulnerability is highlighted (white/red) against players' names.
On one player from each partnership, there is a small 'note' icon at the right of their name. This indicates that it is that player's convention card that is being used.

Many of the sub-windows on the screen can be repositioned. Just drag to an appropriate place (click with your left mouse button on the top bar; hold the button pressed down; drag the box to an empty spot; release the button). I personally have my 'bidding tray' in the centre of the screen (above my hand), and the 'auction table' immediately below my hand (partway into the chat area) – i.e. all in a neat vertical line. Re-docked windows will be retained in their new position; to move a window back to the default location, select 'Playing' 'Dock Bidding'.

Bidding

Board 140 – You are North (bottom of screen). North/South vul ('red tag against name') showing North (blue name) at his turn to bid (the bidding tray and the auction panel have been repositioned). The bidding tray will disappear when North has made his bid. East/West are using East's system card (icon against name). North/South are using South's system card (icon temporarily hidden).

At your turn to bid, your name is shown in pale blue, and you are presented with a 'bidding tray' from which you select your bid and then press 'ok'. The system prevents you from making an inadmissible bid.

If making a conventional bid, you **'self-alert'** – your partner cannot alert your bid (the opposite of f2f bridge). You should then fill in an explanation and press 'OK + Alert'. This will be shown to your opponents, but not to partner. Also an '*' will be shown against the bid in the auction table (not on partner's display).
If you wish to give a further explanation or if you forget to alert a bid, select 'opponents + spectators' at the right-end of the 'chat' box, fill in the extra information, and press 'enter'.
If, as an opponent you want further details, right click on the appropriate player's name in the 'table names' box in the bottom right corner, and via 'private chat' ask your question.
You can see any player's convention card at any time by double-clicking on their name (either at the table or in the lobby).

If you make a mistake in the bidding and wish to retract a bid, click 'undo'. The Director will be called and he will assess whether it was a mis-click (usually the case) in which case he will allow it - that bid and subsequent bids will be retracted by the Director -, or a 'change-of-mind' in which case he will not allow it and play will continue.
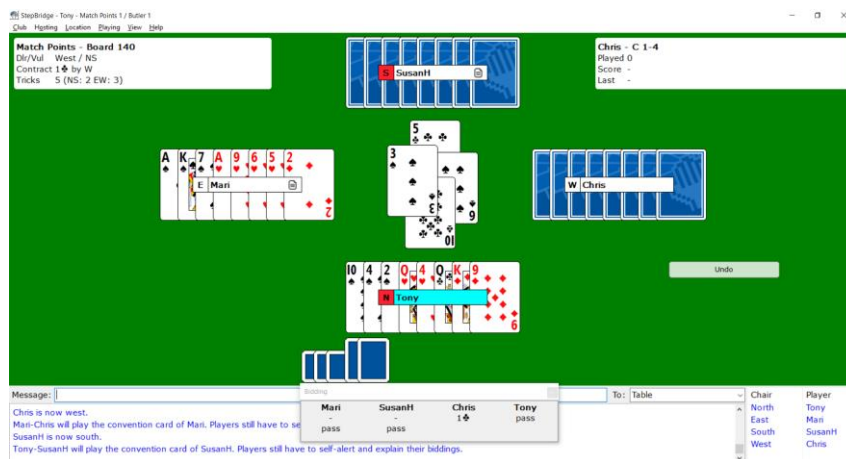
Contract Play

During the play, the trick counter will show the number of tricks to NS and EW. This can be confusing, particularly if on each round you change direction. A more useful method of keeping track of tricks-played is to watch the card placement area just below your own hand – this mimics f2f card placement (this is only readily visible if the screen is maximized).

At any time during the play, the declarer can claim some or all of the remaining tricks (press 'claim' or F2). Unless under time pressure, it's usually better to play out the hand as normal – saves confusion. If a defender challenges declarer's claim, the Director should be called. He may then give an adjusted score (as is the case

with f2f bridge). Note – a defender cannot claim nor concede.

You can review the last trick played at your turn to play by right-clicking the mouse and choosing the option, or pressing F4.

Board 140 – You are North. West is playing in 1♣, and has won 3 tricks, lost 2, and the 6th. trick is just being finished (the auction tray is shown, but can optionally be hidden during the play)

At the end of each hand the result for the board will be automatically displayed (previous boards played can be shown via 'View' 'Competition results').

After the end of the competition, players will be emailed their personal results.

Function Keys

As a quick way to action some of the features described above, players can use shortcut keyboard 'function keys' as follows:

Help	F1
Claim	F2
View bidding	F3 (if chosen not to always show)
View last trick	F4 (at your turn to play)
Undo	F5 (call Director)
All Tables	F6
Board results	F7
Competition results	F8
Friends	F9 (add, contact)
Played board	F11

Tony Haworth