

Bridge Assistant

User's Guide

Bridge Software from SoftTech

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1. GETTING STARTED

This section introduces you to Bridge Assistant and gets you started. I hope you find the program useful. For more information on specific topics see the online help.

a. Introduction

Bridge Assistant is a bridge program that is designed to help you improve aspects of your bridge game by studying hands on your computer.

b. Installing Bridge Assistant

To install Bridge Assistant see the file readme.doc. This file also contains other information about the program that you should be read.

c. Starting Bridge Assistant

Bridge Assistant works in Windows. Therefore before attempting to start it you should start Windows. If you do not know how to it is recommended that you read the Windows User's Guide and familiarise yourself with the Windows environment. Once windows has started you can start Bridge Assistant in a number of ways:

1. Double-click the icon.
2. Use the File-Run option in program manager.
3. Double-click bridge.exe in file manager.

The Bridge Assistant program now runs. An initial screen appears which gives you easy access to the readme.doc file and shareware help file. Press OK to move to the program.

d. First Glance

If the program has been set up correctly you should now see the main window of the program. This has the usual Windows appearance. If you are not familiar with its components - menu, status bar, maximise box, etc. - you should refer to the Windows User's Guide.

2. BASIC IDEAS

a. Using Bridge Assistant

Bridge Assistant works by enabling you to generate interesting hands to study. You can also use the program to save hands that you come across elsewhere; in play, for example, or in books and magazines.

b. Context Sensitive Help

Bridge Assistant has an easy to use interface and extensive context sensitive help. This can be accessed most easily in the following ways:

Keys: SHIFT+F1

Toolbar:

To use select the button or press the key combination above; the cursor will then change shape. Then simply select any menu item, click on a toolbar button, or any part of the program window for which you want information and the help system will start and move you directly to the correct topic.

3. QUICK START

Once Bridge Assistant has started you might like to try the following sequence of actions to see how the program works.

a. Dealing new hands

Select the Deal option from the File menu. (Alternatively use the Deal button in the Toolbar).

Click on it. You should see that the program has dealt. As you are playing south the cards in the south position are the only ones visible. Click the button again, the program will deal another hand.

b. Opening existing hands

Select the Open option from the File menu. (Alternatively use the Open button in the Toolbar).

Click on it. You should see the file open Dialog box appear. Select the file b.brg. This is a file supplied to test that the program has installed correctly and to use in this walk-through. Press OK.

You should see the hand displayed in the same way as when you dealt.

c. Making bids

Decide which bid you would like to bid. 1 Heart is a reasonable bid to make on this hand (using the Standard American Bidding System). Identify the bid palette which is visible on the right of the program window. Press the **1 Heart** button.

The program accepts your bid and displays it in Auction window. The program now proceed to bid for the other players. First the player on your left (the West hand), then your partner (the North hand) and finally the player to your right (the East hand). As you can see in the Auction window your partner bid 1 Spade in reply to your opening bid of 1 Heart.

You now have to rebid. With this hand a reasonable rebid is to bid the diamond suit. Press the **2 Diamonds** button in the Bid palette. Once again the program accepts the bid and then bids for the other hands. Note that your partner returns to your first suit.

You have a strong hand with a major suit fit. Bid **4 Hearts**. The other hands all pass. This means that the contract is 4 Hearts and that you are the Declarer.

d. Playing cards

Now that the auction is complete the play starts. To start the play choose the Play option from the Bridge menu. West will play a card - the opening lead. The dummy will then be displayed. Clearly you now have to decide which card to play. Click on the card in the dummy that you wish to play. The card will be moved to the table and then East will play. Then it will be your turn. Play a card from you own hand.

4. HOW TO

To find out about other things the program can do you should use the context sensitive help system. Below are some brief pointers to other features so far unmentioned:

a. Viewing hands

To view the West hand, for example, simply press the button marked 'W' in the centre of the program window.

b. Saving new hands

Select the Save option from the File menu. (Alternatively use the Save button in the Toolbar). This will preserve interesting hands that you create so that you can use them later.

c. Rotating the deal

Select the Rotate option from the Bridge menu. This moves the East hand to the South position.

d. Creating a specific set of hands

This can be done by displaying the deck and using it to set up the hands. For precise details see the program Help.

e. Arranging the windows on the screen

Often the various windows visible overlap in an inconvenient way; to quickly restore them to their default position select the Arrange option from the View menu.

f. Allowing competitive auctions

Select the Allow Overcalls option from the Options menu. The program will now allow competitive bids i.e. overcalls. If this option is not selected the program will only accept Pass/Nobid whenever an overcall could be made. Obviously this option has to be selected for a realistic bridge game.

5. OTHER FEATURES

Being a computer system the program can also do things which until now bridge players have been unable to do conveniently.

a. Creating specific types of hand

To do this select the Filter option from the Edit menu. This will allow you to specify the type hand you want. For example you can choose to have a deal in which the North/South partnership has 33 HCP and 4 Spades each to practice your slam bidding. This is only one of many possibilities.

Once you have created the filter select the Filter On option from the Options menu. The next time you deal the program will use the filter to find hands of the type you have requested.

Note that by default the program makes 100 test deals. To increase this number use the Config option in Options menu.