

Rules for NIBU Leagues. Revised June 2019

1 Scope

- 1.1 These rules govern the operation of the Premier, Senior, Intermediate A, Intermediate B, Novice and any other Leagues organised by or under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Bridge Union [the Union].
- 1.2 Nothing in these rules shall be interpreted as implying that the Laws of Contract Bridge, as applied by the Union, are in any way diminished or inoperative.

2 Composition and Organisation

- 2.1.1 The leagues in order of ranking are: - Premier Division 1, Premier Division 2, Senior, Intermediate A, Intermediate B and Novice.
- 2.1.2 The Premier League shall consist of a first division of eight teams [Premier Division 1] and, optionally, a second division of up to eight teams [Premier Division 2].
- 2.1.3 Each of the *Senior, Intermediate A, Intermediate B* and *Novice* Leagues shall normally consist of one division of eight teams as provided for in Rule 2.4.5.
- 2.2.1 Each League and each division of the Premier League shall be administered by an Organiser, who shall be appointed for each season by the Competitions Secretary of the Union [the Secretary] or the Council of the Union at the first Council meeting after each Annual General Meeting.
- 2.2.2 Entry to the Leagues shall be made to the Organiser on the Entry Form in the attached schedule [the Entry Form]. Electronic entry is acceptable.
- 2.3.1 Each team shall consist of at least four members.
- 2.3.2 At the date of entry each member of a team named on the Entry Form shall be a member in good standing of a club affiliated to the Union and been issued with an NIBU number.

- 2.3.3 At least one half of the players on each team in each league match shall be members of the Union who satisfy one or more of the following criteria:
[a] birth in Northern Ireland
[b] having a natural parent who was born in Northern Ireland [parents by legal adoption count as natural parents, but parents by marriage do not]
[c] bona fide residence in Northern Ireland for at least two years prior to commencement of a league match
[d] previous participation in a Union league as a resident in Northern Ireland having since moved away
- 2.3.4 Players in all teams shall comply with the relevant provisions of Rules 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9.
- 2.4 *It shall be the duty of the Organiser:*
- 2.4.1 to arrange the venue for each League match and provide computer generated pre-dealt boards for each match and a hand record for each player.
- 2.4.2 to publish on the Union web-site before 15 August in each year a suitable date for the receipt of entries for each League [the League entry date] together with the date and the alternative date of each match. Depending on entries and composition of teams the Organiser shall, if necessary, before 15 September in each year arrange a suitable date or dates for play-offs.
- 2.4.3 to verify the eligibility of each team member prior to accepting the team's entry.
- 2.4.4 to publish on the Union website after the date for entries to a League has expired, the names and master point number of each team member, e-mail address and telephone numbers of the captain of each team, and the venue and date set for each match and the alternative venue and date set for each match.
- 2.4.5 where more or fewer than eight teams have entered a league, to determine the format of that league including considering amalgamation of leagues open to players of senior rank, so however that there are seven league matches in each league.
- 2.4.6 to forward to the Secretary the results and current standings of league matches within seven days of completion of each match for publication by the Secretary on the Union website.

- 2.4.7 to act as Tournament Director for each League match held on the published date and to be available to adjudicate in matches held on the alternative published date. The Organiser may appoint a Tournament Director to act as proxy at a session of the League. Such a Tournament Director shall exercise all the powers of the Organiser insofar as they apply during a match of a League.
- 2.4.8 to maintain a record throughout the season of team memberships.
- 2.4.9 to collect the entry fees at or before the start of play of the first league match.
- 2.4.10 to check on the eligibility of the members of each team before publishing match results on the Union website.
- 2.4.11 to publish on the Union website each ruling made by the Organiser or the Secretary and the decision of each appeal against a ruling of the Organiser or the Secretary.

3 Matches

- 3.1 *Subject to the provisions of Rules 3.1.3, 6.4.1, 6.4.2, 8.1.4, 8.2 and 8.4.2.*
- 3.1.1 Each team in the Premier, Senior, and Intermediate A Leagues shall play each other team in its league or division at least once over 28 boards in four equal stanzas scored by International Match Points (IMPs) converted to Victory Points on the relevant scale used by the Union at the time of the match.
- 3.1.2 Each team in the Intermediate B and Novice Leagues shall play each other team in its league or division at least once over 24 boards and 20 boards respectively in four equal stanzas scored by International Match Points (IMPs) converted to Victory Points on the relevant scale used by the Union at the time of the match.
- 3.1.3 All boards must be played in one session.
- 3.1.4 Subject to Rules 3.1.5 and 6.4.3 only four members of a team may play in any match.
- 3.1.5 If one team member is temporarily delayed, the Tournament Director may, with the agreement of the opposing Captain, play, or permit a spectator to play the first four boards. If agreement is not forthcoming, the match shall be suitably reduced in length.

- 3.2.1 Matches shall, except as provided in Rule 3.3, be played on the due night at the due venue.

- 3.2.2 Each session shall commence at 7.15 p.m. and no new board shall be started after 10.50 p.m. except by express permission of the Tournament Director.
- 3.3.1 Matches shall be played on the published date at the published venue, or, with the agreement of both captains, on the alternative published date and venue. If the latter the teams must inform both the Secretary and the Organiser, otherwise Rule 3.4 may be invoked.
- 3.3.2 In the event that the alternative published date and venue is not agreed by both captains, the Organiser shall at his discretion decide whether the published date or the alternative published date shall apply, but will ensure that so far as is just and equitable that the team prepared to play on the published date is not disadvantaged.
- 3.3.3 Under exceptional circumstances including bereavement, sudden inclement weather preventing travel to the venue, road accident or the like, a team, [the requesting team], may request the opposing team, [the opposing team], for a postponement of the match. Any request for postponement shall be made by the captain of the requesting team to the Organiser and then to the captain of the opposing team. Any bona fide request for postponement shall be granted. If agreement can't be reached the Organiser shall decide. Initial contact with the opposing team must be as soon as feasible. Failure to do so will normally lead to concession of the match.
- 3.3.4 The opposing team shall within three days of having been informed of the exceptional circumstances, offer three dates within the next 14 days for the match to be played. Failure to play on one of these days will be treated as a concession. The venue will be decided by the opposing team. The costs including the costs of room hire and dealing of computer generated hands using the programme used for league boards shall be met by the requesting team. The opposing team captain shall inform the Organiser of the date and venue agreed. The Organiser shall provide the boards.
- 3.3.5 Otherwise than is provided above the Organiser is not empowered to allow a match to be postponed.
- 3.4 If teams play a match without the Organiser's permission at other than the normal date and time, then the match shall be null and void and both teams shall be treated as if they conceded the match under Rule 6.

- 3.5 All matches shall be played using pre-dealt computer generated hands provided by the Organiser and bidding boxes to a pattern approved by the Union.
- 3.6.1 Only systems and conventions approved by the Union shall be used for the relevant league.
- 3.6.2 Any pair in any doubt as to the eligibility of their chosen methods should apply, to the Chair of the Laws & Ethics Committee of the Union for guidance.
- 3.6.3 The Organiser shall apply Rule 8 below if any team uses unapproved methods.
- 3.6.4 Each pair shall have two properly completed convention cards which shall be deemed to provide a complete statement of their methods. In the absence of such the Tournament Director, if the bid does not correspond with the hand, will normally rule that misinformation has been given, rather than that the hand has been misbid.
- 3.7 *Seating Rights*
- 3.7.1 Subject to Rule 3.7.3, there shall be a coin toss to determine seating rights.
- 3.7.2 The captain of the team winning the toss shall elect for the first stanza of boards and for each alternate stanza thereafter to either place his team after the opposing team has nominated its line-up or place his team.
- 3.7.3 Highly Unusual Methods [HUMs] are permitted in Premier Division 1 subject to the provisions set out in the Systems and Conventions published on the Union website.
- 3.7.4 Where a team has a pair or pairs using HUMs that team loses seating rights whenever these pair[s] play.

4 Promotion and Relegation

- 4.1.1 Subject to Rule 6.1 at the end of each season the lowest placed team in the Premier Division 1 League shall be relegated to the Premier Division 2 League. The place left vacant shall be filled by the leading team in Premier Division 2.
- 4.1.2 Within fourteen days of the completion of the last Premier Division 2 league match, the second placed team in Premier Division 2 may opt to play off against the seventh placed team in Premier Division 1 in a 28 board match arranged by the Organiser of Premier Division 1. To avoid relegation to Premier Division 2 the Premier Division 1 team must win the play off by at least one IMP.

- 4.1.3 If the second placed team in Premier Division 2 does not opt to play off against the seventh placed team in Premier Division 2, the seventh placed team in Premier Division 1 shall remain in Premier Division 1.
- 4.2.1 The winning team in the Senior League may opt to be promoted to Premier Division 2. If the number of teams in Premier Division 2 thereby would exceed eight, then the lowest placed team in Premier Division 2 shall be relegated.
- 4.2.2 Within fourteen days of the completion of the last Senior league match, the second placed team in Senior may opt to play off against the seventh placed team in Premier Division 2 in a 24 board match arranged by the Organiser of Premier Division 2. To avoid relegation to the Senior League the Premier Division 2 team must win the play off by at least one IMP.
- 4.2.3 If the second team in the Senior League does not wish to play then the seventh team in Premier Division 2 shall remain in Premier Division 2. The Premier Division 2 Organiser shall be responsible for the playoffs described in this paragraph.
- 4.3 At the end of each season the winning team in a Novice, Intermediate B and Intermediate A League is entitled to promotion to the League immediately ranked above that of the winning team. The suitably qualified team members of a winning team may remain in a league. Team members who have played in one third* or more of the league matches in a season in a team which wins the League in two successive years may at the discretion of the Organiser play in that league or a lower League the following year.

* Note: the answer to the calculation of one third will always be rounded up to the nearest whole number; this applies to all references to one third in these Rules.

5 Changes in Formation of Teams and Eligibility

- 5.1.1 Every team must designate at least four team members on the Entry Form.
- 5.1.2 All notifications of team members shall include the Master-Points numbers of the team members.
- 5.2 *Substitute Team Members*
- 5.2.1 A player, who has not been named on a team's Entry Form, who plays on a league team is a substitute team member.
- 5.2.2 A substitute team member is eligible to play on no more than one team in a division or league in a season.

- 5.2.3 There is no limit to the number of substitutes who may play on a team.
- 5.2.4 A substitute team member shall be a member in good standing of a club affiliated to the Union who has been issued with an NIBU Masterpoints number prior to the start of a league match.
- 5.2.5 A team member named on an Entry Form is not eligible to play in a lower ranked division or league.
- 5.2.6 A substitute team member who plays one third or more of the league matches in a season in the same league team shall be ineligible to play in a lower ranked division or league in the next season.
- 5.2.7 A substitute team member who has played one third or more of the league matches in a season in the same league team shall have the rights set out in Rule 5.12.1.
- 5.2.8 A team member who plays one third or more of the league matches in a season shall receive placing Master Points. A substitute team member shall be eligible to receive Master Points for matches in which the substitute team member played.

- 5.3 It is the obligation of each Captain to ascertain the eligibility of team members and substitute team members.

- 5.4 In the case of Novice, Intermediate A and Intermediate B Leagues no proposed member of a team or substitute is eligible if that member is registered as a player of a category higher than that of the League in which the member is intending to play.

- 5.5 In the case of Senior and Premier Leagues no member of a team or substitute is eligible if that player has played a match in a higher division or League in the current season. Matches played for a higher league team prior to the player becoming a regular member of a team do not affect eligibility.

- 5.6 In the season after having been relegated a team member of a relegated team who has played one third or more of the league matches in a season in the same league, is eligible to play as a substitute team member in the division or league, from which that team member has been relegated, in-no more than two matches.

- 5.7 In the season after having been relegated a team member of a relegated team, is eligible to play in a higher division or League for no more than two league matches.
- 5.8 Each member of a league team is ineligible to play in a league match in a lower ranked division or League.
- 5.9 Except as provided in Section 3.1.4 no player may play for more than one team in any division or League.

Rules 5.10 - 5.15 apply to the Premier League and its Divisions.

- 5.10.1 After promotions and relegations in Premier Division 1, if the number of entries falls below 8, the vacancy or vacancies shall not be filled by reorganisation of the teams who played in Premier Division 1 during the previous season.
- 5.10.2 The vacancy or vacancies shall be filled from the relegated team or teams or from teams that were members of Premier Division 2 in the previous year, normally according to the position of teams in that division in the previous year. The Secretary shall nominate the teams to fill the vacancy or vacancies [after such playoffs as the Secretary deems appropriate] or refer such nomination to the Laws & Ethics Committee.
- 5.11.1 After promotions and relegations in Premier Division 2, if the number of entries falls below 8, the vacancy or vacancies shall not be filled by reorganisation of the teams who played in Premier Division 1 during the previous season.
- 5.11.2 The vacancy or vacancies shall be filled from the relegated team or teams together with teams from the Senior League invited by the Secretary to play in playoffs.

- 5.12.1 In Premier Division 1 and Premier Division 2 if a team wishes, from season to season, to change team members the following rules apply.
- a) Only team members who have played one third or more of the league matches in the same league in the previous season have rights in decisions pertaining to changes in personnel
 - b) Two members of a team who have played one third or more of the league matches in the same league in the previous season shall not be considered a team.
- A team is only deemed to remain in being if a majority of the players (at least three of whom have played one third or more of the league matches in the same league in the previous season) wish to continue playing together.
- 5.12.2 If Rule 5.12.1 is satisfied, the team may submit an entry by the addition of eligible team members. However, where four or more six players of members of a team who have played one third or more of the league matches in the same league in the previous season wish to split into two equal parts Rule 5.12.3 applies.
- 5.12.3 If the team splits into two equal parts the Organiser shall require the two resulting teams to play off for the place. The winning team shall be the team winning by 1 Imp or more. The losing team shall be relegated to the Premier Division 2 or Senior League.
- 5.12.4 If two or more teams of the same division wish to re-arrange team members then, unless the number of teams would thereby increase, the Organiser shall normally acquiesce in the re-arrangements unless they are contested by team members of one of the teams involved who have played one third or more of the league matches in the same league in the previous season, when Rule 5.12.3 shall apply.
- 5.13 If for any other reason a team does not accept its rightful place the vacancy shall be filled at the discretion of the Secretary.

6 Scoring Methods and Concessions

- 6.1 Save for a concession after a match has started on the grounds set out in Rules 6.4.1 and 6.4.2, if a team fails to complete more than two matches all the team members who have played on that team shall be relegated.
- 6.2 All matches shall be scored by International Match Points [Imps] converted to Victory Points [VPs] on the scale set out in the Appendix hereto.

- 6.3 The final placings in each division shall be decided by the total VPs scored.
- 6.4.1 No team may concede during a match (except for reasons of ill-health) unless the opposing team has already established a lead sufficient to score a maximum victory (currently 20 VPs).
- 6.4.2 If a concession is made on health grounds then, if the other team has a lead sufficient to give 12 VPs or more it shall be awarded that score, else it shall be awarded 12 VPs. The conceding team will be awarded the remaining VPs.
- 6.4.3 The Tournament Director may, at his discretion, with the consent of the opposing captain, as a substitute complete, or ask a spectator as a substitute to complete, the match in the place of the ill player. Similar provisions apply as under Rule 3.1.4.
- 6.4.4 Wilful violation of this rule shall invoke standard Union penalties for refusing to complete a fixture. The match will be scored as under Rule 6.5 or 6.4.2.
- 6.5 If a team concedes a match before the start of the match, the opposing team shall be awarded 12 VPs, the average number of VPs scored over all the opposing team's other matches [both before and after the conceded match], or the average number of VPs conceded by the conceding team in their other matches, whichever is the greatest. The offending team shall receive 0 VPs.
- 6.6 Subject to any request for postponement made under Rule 3.3.3 and to the result of a postponed match, any team failing to turn up for a match or being more than 30 minutes late for the start of a match shall receive 0 VPs.

- 6.7 If a team completes a match and it is subsequently discovered that the opposition has fielded an ineligible player, the non-offending team shall be awarded 12 VPs or the average number of VPs scored in all their other matches (both before and after that match) or the score actually obtained in the match, whichever is the greater. The offending team shall receive 0 VPs.

7 Breaking of Ties

- 7.1 If two or more teams finish with the same VP total, the tie shall be broken by [in descending order]:-
- [a] the result of the direct match in VPs; then
 - [b] total net aggregateimps scored in all league matches.

8 Penalties for Rule Infractions

8.1 Slow Play

- 8.1.1 Penalties may be imposed against any team whose members, in the Tournament Director's opinion, are guilty of slow play. The penalty for slow play during any set of 6/7 boards is 1VP. A penalty may be imposed for slow play during each and every set of 6/7 boards.
- 8.1.2 'Slow play' is the inability to maintain a playing speed of seven boards plus scoring per 55 minutes. When six boards are being played 50 minutes is allowed.
- 8.1.3 Any competitor who considers that an opponent or opponents are, in his opinion, playing slowly should call the Tournament Director's attention to the situation else the Tournament Director shall consider each pair to be equally guilty of slow play.
- 8.1.4 The Tournament Director may, at his discretion, rule that one or more boards of the set cannot be played, in which case the penalties for not completing 28 boards may at the Tournament Directors discretion be invoked.
- 8.1.5 Any penalty may be withdrawn if the Tournament Director is satisfied that the team members have recovered lost time.
- 8.1.6 The Tournament Director may issue a warning to a table following which the 1VP penalty set out in Rule 8.1.1 above shall apply to any table in that match which fails to complete a stanza within the allotted time.

8.1.7 The Tournament Director may apportion the responsibility for slow play between the two pairs involved. The Tournament Director may monitor or appoint a person to monitor to assess the responsibility for the speed of play either on request of one of the players or of his own volition.

8.2 Non-completion of scheduled boards

8.2.1 If a match is running behind schedule the Tournament Director shall decide the number of boards to be played in the last set of boards.

8.2.2 In Premier Divisions 1 and 2 and the Senior Leagues failure to complete the prescribed number of boards in time shall attract an automatic penalty of 2 VPs on both teams where the competitors have not drawn the Tournament Director's attention to slow play. In other Leagues it shall be at the Tournament Director's discretion.

8.2.3 The Tournament Director shall have the power to impose further penalties up to an additional 3 VPs for what is, in his opinion, excessively slow play, or deliberately slow play.

8.3 Use of unapproved methods

8.3.1 The conventions and systems permitted to be used in each league are described in Rule 3.

8.3.2 The penalty for using any unapproved convention(s) or system(s) is 2 VPs or such other penalty as the Tournament Director, to a maximum of 6 VPs, may decide is just and equitable.

8.3.3 The Tournament Director may award the non-offending team such part, up to the whole, of the penalty where he thinks they have suffered.

8.3.4 The use of unapproved methods must cease upon discovery: continued use shall entail concession in addition to the penalty already incurred.

8.4 Late arrival

8.4.1 A team is late if one or more playing members of that team are not seated and ready to play at the advertised starting time. Warnings and penalties apply to the team as a whole rather than to any individual or to any partnership within a team.

- 8.4.2 The penalties described below apply to each separate match.
- 8.4.2.1 There will be a penalty of 1 VP for any team not seated at the advertised starting time, save that a warning will be issued in lieu of a penalty for the first offence of no more than 10 minutes of lateness.
- 8.4.2.2 Thereafter for each portion of 10 minutes late or part thereof up to 30 minutes late, there shall be an additional 1VP penalty. The Tournament Director may after discussion with the non-offending sides Captain reduce the number of boards to be played.
- 8.4.3 Subject to any request for postponement made under Rule 3.3.3 and to the result of a postponed match, if a team is more than 30 minutes late the match is abandoned due to late arrival and the match shall be treated as conceded by the offending team.
- 8.4.4 A team which feels that it can demonstrate good cause for late arrival may apply to the Organiser for a waiver or relaxation of any penalty.

8.5 *Fouled stanza*

- 8.5.1 A stanza is fouled if teams sit in the same direction in both rooms and the error is not discovered until the end of the stanza or, after two thirds of the boards in that stanza have been played.
- 8.5.2 When a stanza is fouled the stanza is abandoned and scored as 0 imps to both teams. The match will still be scored as if had been played in full.
- 8.5.3 When a stanza is fouled both teams shall be penalized 1.5 VPs.

9 Notification of Results

- 9.1 All results, including those of re-arranged matches, must be received, in writing or email, by the Organiser or the Secretary or the Tournament Director within 48 hours of the completion of the match.

- 9.2 The information to be notified shall include :-
- a) the names and Master Point numbers of all members of both teams playing in the match,
 - b) the actual IMP scores of both teams, and
 - c) the signature of both captains, or if by email similar evidence of agreement.
- A team failing to provide the above information after a league match shall incur a penalty of 1 VP.

9.3 The Secretary shall ensure that all results and current standings within each division are posted on the Union web-site and are available at the start of each session.

9.4.1 The captain of any team may apply to the Organiser within 96 hours of the completion of a match for an adjustment to the score submitted to the Organiser.

9.4.2 The Organiser, after inviting and considering any submission made by the opposing captain, shall rule on the application for an adjusted score.

10 Decisions, Rulings and Appeals

10.1 In all matters not specifically covered by these rules the initial power of decision rests with the Competitions Secretary of the Union [the Secretary].

10.2 In the event that the Secretary or the appointed Organiser is conflicted in a matter about which a decision is being sought, the power of decision shall be exercised by the Laws & Ethics Committee, and in the event that any members of the Laws & Ethics Committee are conflicted, by the non-conflicted members of the Laws & Ethics Committee.

10.3.1 The Secretary, Organiser or member of an Appeal Panel who is a team member of a team in a division or league shall be deemed to be conflicted when making a decision or ruling imposing a sanction or penalty on a team in that division or league.

- 10.3.2 A decision or ruling made by a deemed conflicted Secretary or Organiser or an Appeal Panel which includes a member deemed conflicted, shall be null and void.
- 10.4 An appeal against a decision or ruling of the Organiser or the Secretary shall be made in writing, stating the grounds of appeal, accompanied by a deposit of £50, to the Chair or Secretary of the Laws & Ethics Committee within 14 days of the publication of the decision or ruling on the Union web-site.
- 10.5 An allegation of conflict of interest made by an Appellant against a member of an Appeal Panel, provided it is supported by evidence, shall be dealt with as a preliminary issue prior to a hearing.
- 10.6 A team member who has been ruled by the Organiser or the Secretary as ineligible to play on a team shall be ineligible to play in that league for the remainder of the season or until the ruling has been set aside on appeal.
- 10.7 The deposit paid by an Appellant shall be refunded if the Appeal Panel decides that there has been no breach of the League Rules but not otherwise.

LEAGUE
ENTRY FORM

League	
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Captain e-mail address Home telephone number Mobile phone number	
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Team Members	Master Point No.
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Notes:

- [1] All team members except substitute team members must be members of a club affiliated to the NIBU at the date of submission of this entry.
- [2] The entry fee is £160 per team, reduced if fewer than seven matches, due and payable on the first night.
- [3] Rules of the competition are published on the NIBU website.