A quick guide to video conferencing software for teaching bridge.

Prepared 7 November, 2021. All links at the bottom of the article.

This is about a teaching class, followed by practice deals.

# In a Nutshell

**For best audio and video:** use Zoom (limited to 100 users, and 40 minutes)

**For unlimited “free”:** Use any of Microsoft Teams, Google Meets (and the rest in the list below).

**What if my lesson is shorter than 40 minutes?** use Zoom. No question about it.

**Are the “pay for” option good value for money?** Yes, we think so. Watch out for some special offers. But you can certainly get by on the free service.

**Do the apps transcribe the meeting?** Some do, including Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and they do it reasonably well. It is also possible to record the session. Think twice about that, some people do not like being recorded.

**Why is Zoom better than the others?** Zoom have their own proprietary way of doing things and video conferencing is their specialty. The quality of the video conference on Zoom is superb and the user experience is simple enough for anyone to use.

**Why do you need to close one app to use your camera in another?** The way your camera works is that it can only be engaged with one app (slightly different with some Apple devices). You can use your camera more than once in a single application. So, for example, you can open Chrome, use your camera in more than one tab, and it works fine. But you cannot have it working in Chrome and Zoom at the same time. Also, you cannot have it working in Chrome and Edge at the same time.

**Why is the image a bit jittery at times?** If a person has poor or variable broadband, the video image pixelates. Sometimes simply sitting closer to the router really helps. Closing all other applications helps, and just check to see others in the house are not watching the football or downloading Dr Zhivago. Only an average standard home broadband package is needed for video and sound during play.

**Can I share documents using the video application?** Yes, but it is simpler and better to use email. If you share it via Zoom, for example, the recipient may not know how to download it.

**What is a good balance between teaching and playing, for a unit of a lesson?** This is down to personal choice. But probably best to think of 15 to 30 minutes of teaching, then 60 to 90 minutes of playing. The playing time is not as intense, and the player can pop to kitchen and get a cup of coffee while dummy. Most people do not want to sit still for more than about 2.5 hours.

**Can I record a video of a deal (auction and play) with a voiceover, and distribute the video?** Yes, this is very easy to do. There are many tools available for capturing what you are seeing on your screen. You can make a film of yourself narrating the whole deal, and then upload it to YouTube or a website. That doesn’t need video conferencing tools at all, it another unrelated process. We recommend OBS for screen and voice recording.

# How might I structure a lesson followed by set hands on RealBridge?

1. Start by **sending out** somenotes and 2 links, one for the video meeting, and one for the play. If you want people to sit in designated tables, mention that.
2. Work out if your group is large enough to **need a teaching assistant** (or two) for the supervised play/set hands.
3. 1 hour before start (or earlier if you want), **load your PBN file,** and **set up the session**. Remember you can “name the tables”. That is like signposting people and can match up with the instructions in step 1.
4. **Optional: create a table notice,** to appear on the table, and to draw attention to the key theme of the lesson. Use an image or graphic to hone in on the point.
5. **Start Zoom (for example) about 15 minutes before your lesson**. Immediately **share your desktop**. Allow the participants time to arrange the screen so that the videos of the people do not block your shared desktop.
6. After greeting the players, **mute the participants,** and invite them to raise their hand if they want to ask a question. If there are more than 2 hands up, say something like “Jane first, then Pat, then Kim”. Remind them to unmute themselves. If your group is just 4, then maybe don’t mute them.
7. Just before you are ready to move to RealBridge for your play practice, remind the players to **close Zoom completely,** and **join the RealBridge session.**
8. **Ask tablet players to lay the tablet on a cushion or table**. If it is wobbling around on a lap, then this can be uncomfortable viewing for the others.
9. **Start your RealBridge session**.
10. At the end of the supervised play,
    1. Remind them about the **next session** using the video broadcast.
    2. Explain that they can **see the deals later by using the same link**.

# Links

## Video conferencing

Zoom: <https://www.zoom.us>

Microsoft Teams: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com>

Webex: <https://www.webex.com>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

## RealBridge

RealBridge: <https://realbridge.online>

## Videos

Best option is OBS Screen Recording: <https://obsproject.com/>

An example of a built-in option is: Windows, using Windows + G

Uploading a video to YouTube:

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/57407?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop>