

U3A Duplicate Bridge Group – How are places allocated

A few people have asked me to clarify how I allocate places for the Radlett U3A Duplicate Bridge Group.

I currently (26th December 2023) have 120 people on my interest list.

When playing online using RealBridge

I am not limited by numbers when playing online. However I allocate place in the following order:

- 1) Regular partnerships who are both playing will always have a space.
- 2) Radlett U3A members who don't have a regular partner or whose partner is not playing that week I will try to allocate a partner from the others that do not have one, Radlett U3A members first unless they have told me they don't want to play with a particular person.
- 3) Members of other U3As and others from Radlett U3A who still don't have a partner I will try to pair up with one another spare person.
- 4) If there is just one person left without a partner (which would normally be a member of another U3A) they will be asked to be on a reserve list for the day in case of any last minute dropouts or people who don't arrive by 9:50.
- 5) When I can I will try to make sure that a person is not on the reserve list too frequently.
- 6) If I do get last minute dropouts or people not turn up and I don't have anyone left on the reserve list I will try to partner those that are now without a partner with anyone else who is now 'spare', though this will not always be possible.

When playing face to face

The maximum I can fit in and have equipment for is 48 people (12 tables), but depending on other circumstances I may need to restrict this to 46 or 44. Note at the moment (end of 2023) I do not normally have enough people wanting to play face to face to run regular face to face sessions.

As such if I do run a face to face session it will normally be possible for me to find a place for anyone who wants to play.

If I do become full for a face to face session places will be allocated in the following manner.

1. Face to face Season ticket holders. I will 'sell' up to 46 'face to face' season tickets for each term (typically a half year). Holders are always guaranteed a place if they want to play and I only ask that they let me know if they can't play on a particular date so I can offer their place to someone else. When the seasons tickets come up for renewal I offer them first to existing holders. If some people do not renew then I will offer them to the group members (I have a waiting list for them).
2. Group members. These are Radlett U3A members that started playing in the group before 1st January 2022. I picked that date as I felt unfair for people that had supported the group a long time, some going back to when it started in 2015, that they could not get a place when other 'newcomers' did. These people get the first choice of places after season ticket holders (see below for how I pick between them when there are fewer places available than there are people who want them). On my sign up list I have at each session they appear as 'Wait' if I have not yet got a space for them.
3. Other Radlett U3A members. These can get a place if I still have room after people from the first two groups have got spaces. The same process below applies for how I pick who plays. They appear as 'Radlett' on my sign up list.

4. Members of other U3A's. These can get a place if I still have room after all the above groups who want a place have got one. They appear as 'Other' on my sign up list.

How are the available places distributed?

For the people in each of the groups 2., 3. and 4. above I try to give them equal opportunities to play over time so I keep track of how often a person has played in the current term, or last 6 months at the start of a term. I give first choice of places to the people that have played least in that period.

Where I have a regular partnership in one of the groups I try to keep them together so they get the advantage that if one has played more frequently than the other they get the same 'ranking' as the less frequent one.

I also take account of when people tell me they are not going to play for a period of time (e.g. the next couple of months) and I will push them up the ranking so that they don't miss out on a space if they probably would have got one while they were away.

There are also a few 'special cases' where I will give a place to someone if they need to be there for a specific reason (e.g. if they are going to help run a session when I am not there).

I hope this clarifies things and assures you that I do try to be as fair as possible.