

Unusual movements for unusual times

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COVID19 has certainly impacted our bridge games at the local clubs. If it is possible to run an event at all there are typically restrictions on the number of tables, social distancing, cleaning and canteen to name the obvious. As a result most clubs are finding they can only cater for a few tables at best.

With a small number of tables the director only has a few options. Having two tables usually means a teams match but an individuals movement is another possibility. With three tables the best option is a Howell movement run over 5 rounds with 5 or 6 boards per round. If you happen to have 9, 10 or 11 players the only real option is an individual game. Other than that if you have an even number of pairs a Howell or small Mitchell movement are your usual choices.

That said there are a few other issues that can affect your game:

- The need for more stationary pairs.
- The number of boards per session are restricted.
- Your club does not have Howell guide cards.
- There is a half table and more than a 3 board sit-out is unattractive at best.
- Social distancing.
- Many players and Directors dislike the Howell movement.

I will now discuss some of the other options available to the director without using the Howell movement. If you find some of the terms unfamiliar, consider purchasing my book '*Duplicate bridge schedules*' from Paul Lavings' book shop www.Bridgegear.com. To make it easier I can supply movement templates for your scoring program.

An ideal number of boards for a low numbers of table with two-winners is often around 27. Playing 9 three-board rounds delivers a reasonable length round (say 20 minutes) and is not too many boards for the sit-out.

Consider the following options where the NS players are stationary. In some cases a minor disadvantage is that pairs play other pairs 2 or 3 times, though ultimately it is no different than playing a Mitchell for the same number of tables and boards. Where the movement has one winner you may choose to switch the last one or two rounds. That said, switching is not recommended and generally not of much real value. Any movement where the pairs only plays about half the field the balance quality will always be poor and difficult to improve. The rover guides below show the seating positions before any switches. The sit-out pairs will only ever be idle for 2 or 3 boards.

Mitchell movements

The Mitchell movement is fine so long as the number of rounds produces a session of a reasonable number of boards. With 4 Tables you have a 28 (4x7) board session, 5 tables 25 boards (5x5) and 6 tables 24 boards (6x4). Adding one or removing one board from each set will sometimes suit your needs. Using a fattened movement (*p 115*) will give you a lot of flexibility on the number of boards played.

Adding a half table to each of these cases will often prove to be a nuisance. In most cases the number of boards in the sit-out is unacceptable. One solution is to use a roving pair playing half the boards at each table they visit, first playing half with the North-South Pair and half with the East-West pair (*p 106*). For practical reasons use the same number of boards against each pair. The rover

schedules are found on page 107 and repeated here. At the first table the rover sits out for the first half round and replaces the NS pair for the second half. For all other rounds they replace the EW pair first for half of the boards and then NS for the second half.

4 Tables: 2,3,1,4

5 Tables: 1,3,5,2,4

6 Tables: 1,3,5,2,4,6

7 Tables: 1,3,5,7,2,4,6

8 Tables play a 9 table Mitchell with each EW pair sitting out for one 3-board round.

Clay movements

The Clay movement (*pp 51 and 231*) would be new to most directors. The setup is very similar to the Mitchell movement. The difference is the distribution of the boards. Half the boards of the first board set is placed on table 1 (say boards 1 and 2). The other half (say 3-4) are placed on a relay table between tables 1 and 2. Then 5-6 on table 2 and 7-8 on a relay between tables 2 and 3, and so forth with the last half set on the relay at the end of the movement. When the end of each round is called the East-west pairs pick up the boards they have just played and place them on the relay table just before their next table. The EW pair then pick up the boards from that relay and play them at their next table. This proceeds in this way until the end of the movement irrespective of the number of tables in the movement.

The similarity to the Mitchell and the American Whist League movements means that the players have no problems with the routine. Never needing skip rounds or board sharing with even numbers of tables is a bonus. The North-South field is always stationary, just like the Mitchell movement.

The unusual thing is the East-West pairs traverse the movement twice to complete all the boards, playing each pair twice. You will find the revenge round becomes almost a favored feature of the movement. For practical reasons only play 2 or 3 boards against each pair. The number of boards played is no different from that played in a Mitchell movement of the same number of tables.

The shorter rounds means less waiting time at the end of each round for the faster players. The real bonus is the ability to introduce a rover pair displacing either N-S or E-W pairs throughout the session.

Where you have a half table the EW pair numbers are equal to the starting table number plus the number of tables and you have a one winner movement. Note the regular pattern for the Rover schedules in the 5 and 7 table examples below. Any movement can be shortened by stopping after an even number of rounds. For example with 7 tables you may stop play after round 12, playing 24 boards.

4 Table Clay Rover schedule (Pair 9):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Out	NS2	EW2	NS1	EW1	EW3	NS3	EW2

5 Table Clay Rover schedule (Pair 11):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Out	NS2	EW2	NS1	EW1	NS5	EW5	NS4	EW4	NS3

6 Table Clay Rover schedule (Pair 13):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Out	NS2	EW2	NS1	EW1	EW6	NS6	NS4	EW4	EW1	NS3	EW4

7 Table Clay Rover schedule (Pair 15):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Out	NS2	EW2	NS1	EW1	NS7	EW7	NS6	EW6	NS5	EW5	NS4	EW4	NS3

Web Mitchell movements

The Web Mitchell movement (*p 104*) is essentially the same as a normal Mitchell movement. That is, EW pairs move up one table and boards down one table. Typically two complete sets of boards are needed but this is not a problem today as most clubs have dealing machines. The distribution of the board sets is different from the standard Mitchell movement. You need an even number of tables (excluding a half table) though an odd number can be handled in different ways. The number of board sets is flexible though for our discussion here 9 sets of 3 boards (total 27) are being used so we have a 3 board sit-out. Note the number of boards has no correlation to the number of tables in the movement.

For distributing the boards the movement is divided into two partitions, each partition having the same number of tables. The first partition of the movement use one set of boards and the other partition the second set. Place board set one (say 1-3) on table one, two set (4-6) on table two and so forth. After the last table in the first partition the rest of the boards are placed on a relay table. For the second partition the last table in the movement gets the last board set (25-27) of the second duplicate set of boards. The second last table gets set one (1-3), the third last table set two (4-6) and so forth down to the first table of the second partition. The remainder of the boards are placed on a relay at the **end** of the movement. The boards at all tables always move down one table at each change, but staying in their original partition. Boards from table one move to the relay table in the middle of the movement. Boards from the first table in partition two move to the relay table at the end of the movement. Note in partition one the N-S pairs play the boards in ascending order and in partition two the N-S pairs play the boards in descending order.

When you add an extra pair ($\frac{1}{2}$ table) to these movements they becomes a one-winner movement with a roving pair. For the EW pair numbers, add the number of tables to the EW pair starting table. The roving pair has the next pair number.

Four tables

Use a 4 table Web Mitchell (*p 103*) with 9 board sets and rounds. When there is an extra pair (pair 9) they sit out for the first round and then displace a pair (NS or EW) on each round.

4 Table Web Mitchell Rover schedule (pair 9)

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Sit out	EW1	NS3	NS1	EW3	EW2	EW4	NS2	NS4

Five tables

The normal Web Mitchell movement does not apply for 5 tables. When you have $5\frac{1}{2}$ tables the 5 Table Web Mitchell with Hesitation (*p 104*) works well and is a one winner movement. Set up a 4 Table Web Mitchell for 9 sets of boards (as above) and add one more table (5) next to table 1 so they can share boards. NS pair numbers are 1 to 5 and EW 6 to 10 respectively. The boards move as

required by the Web Mitchell with table 5 sharing boards with table 1. The NS pairs are stationary and EW pairs move up one table (just like a standard Web Mitchell) with the following exceptions. The EW pair at table 5 moves to NS at table 4 and NS at table 4 moves to EW at table 1.

The extra pair (pair 11) sit out for the first round and then displace a pair (NS or EW) on each round.

5 Table Web Mitchell (with Hesitation) Rover schedule (pair 11)

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Sit out	EW2	NS2	EW3	NS3	EW3	EW2	EW4	NS1

Six tables

Use a 6 table Web Mitchell with 9 rounds. When there is an extra pair (pair 13) they sit out for the first round and then displace a pair (NS or EW) on each round.

6 Table Web Mitchell Rover schedule (Pair 13):

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Sit out	EW2	NS2	EW5	NS5	EW3	NS3	EW6	NS6

Seven tables

Similar to five tables above, use a 7 table Web Mitchell with Hesitation (*p 104*). This is a one winner movement with 9 rounds (for a 2 winner movement use other options discussed later). Set up a 6 Table Web Mitchell for 9 sets of boards and add one more table (7) next to table 1 so they can share boards. NS pair numbers are 1 to 7 and EW 8 to 14 respectively. The boards move as required by the Web Mitchell with table 7 sharing boards with table 1. The NS pairs are stationary and EW pairs move up one table with the following exceptions. The EW pair at table 7 moves to NS at table 6 and NS at table 6 moves to EW at table 1.

The extra pair (pair 15) sits out for the first round and then displace a pair (NS or EW) on each round.

7 Table Web Mitchell with Hesitation Rover schedule (pair 15)

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Sit out	EW2	NS2	NS4	EW4	EW7	EW3	NS3	NS5

Eight tables

Use an 8 table Web Mitchell with 13 rounds. When there is an extra pair (pair 17) they sit out for the first round and then displace a pair (NS or EW) on each round. This is a fairly neat one winner movement with a two board sit-out.

8 Table Web Mitchell Rover schedule (Pair 17):

Rnd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Out	NS1	NS3	EW5	NS7	NS2	NS6	NS8	NS4	EW2	EW8	EW6	EW8

Extra board Mitchell movements

The extra-board Mitchell (*p 114 Parker Modification*) is simply a Mitchell movement playing more boards than would normally be used. The extra boards (an even number of sets) are placed on one

or two relay tables. With an even number of tables there is no skip or share. Pairs often play each other more than once. EW pairs always move up one table and boards down one table or onto the relay tables. All tables play boards in ascending order. Adding a half table makes it a one winner movement, with the EW pair numbers equal to their starting table number plus the number of tables in the movement.

Four tables

Use a 4 Table Mitchell with 6 extra sets of boards, three sets on a relay table between tables 2 and 3 and three at the end of the movement.

You will notice there are ten sets of boards and so with three boards per set you have a movement of 30 boards. This works fine except that the EW pairs at tables 2 and 4 need to swap places for the last round.

When there is an extra pair (pair 9) they sit out for the first round and then displace a pair (NS or EW) on each round. There are only 9 pairs so only 9 rounds can be played. Therefore board sets 1, 5, 6 and 10 are played only three times and the swapping of the two EW pairs on round 10 does not apply.

4 Table extra-board Rover schedule (pair 9)

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Sit out	EW2	EW4	NS2	NS4	EW1	NS3	NS1	EW3

Five tables

Use a 5 Table Mitchell with 4 extra sets of boards upon a relay table at the end of the movement.

EW pairs and boards move as above. The only exception is for the EW-pairs special move **after round 7**:

EW at table:	1	2	3	4	5
Go to table:	5	4	3	2	1

5 Table extra-boards Rover schedule (pair 11)

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Sit out	EW2	EW4	EW1	EW3	EW5	NS2	NS4	NS1

Six Tables

Use a 6 Table Mitchell with 2 or 6 extra sets of boards, one or three sets on a relay table between tables 2 and 3 and one or three sets at the end of the movement. The board and pair movement are the same as above.

This movement gives two options for the same number of boards, 24 (8x3 and 12x2). Using 6 extra sets for 12 rounds is the best option with an extra half table. A 27 board option is not available. All pairs play the other pairs twice so they have a revenge round. When there is no extra half table you would normally run a share and relay Mitchell with 6 rounds of 4 boards and a 24 board session.

When there is an extra pair (pair 13) they sit out for the first round and then displace a pair (NS or EW) on each round. They do play NS2 twice. Essentially this is the same as the 6 Table Clay above.

6 Table extra-board Rover schedule (pair 13)

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Sit out	EW1	NS4	NS2	EW5	EW3	NS1	NS6	EW4	EW2	NS5	EW2

Seven Tables

Use a 7 Table Mitchell with 2 extra sets of boards on a relay at the end of the movement. The board and pair movement are the same as above. This gives a movement with 9 rounds of 3 boards. The only unusual move for the EW pairs is on the last round after moving up one table for round 9, they swap places at tables 2x7, 3x6 and 4x5.

7 Table extra-board Rover schedule (pair 15)

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Sit out	NS2	NS4	NS6	NS1	NS3	EW7	EW4	EW2

Eight tables

Use an eight table Mitchell with 6 extra sets of boards, three sets on a relay table between tables 4 and 5 and three sets at the end of the movement. The board and pair movement are the same as above. The only exception is for the EW-pairs special move **after round 11**:

EW at table:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Go to table:	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

8 Table extra-board Rover schedule (pair 17)

Rnd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Sit out	NS 2	EW 2	EW 4	NS 4	NS 7	NS 3	EW 3	EW 5	NS 8	EW 1	NS 5	NS 1	EW 1

Ten tables

Use a ten table Mitchell with 2 extra sets of boards, one set on a relay table between tables 5 and 6 and one set at the end of the movement. This is good for a 24 board session and a two board sit. The board and pair movement are the same as above. The only exception is for the EW-pairs special move **after round 11**:

EW at table:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Go to table:	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

10 Table extra-board Rover schedule (pair 21)

Rnd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Sit out	NS 2	EW 2	EW 4	NS 4	EW 7	NS 7	NS 10	EW 2	EW 7	NS 1	NS 9

1½ Table Appendix Mitchell movements

The 1½ table appendix Mitchell (*p 101*) from the players' point of view is just another Mitchell movement with two winners. For the Director it caters for those really pesky numbers of tables plus an extra pair, namely 10½ and 11½ tables. Subtract 1½ tables from the total and set up a normal Mitchell movement for those numbers of tables (9 and 10 in these cases) with 3 boards per table. Place one more table next to table 1 (tables 10 or 11 here) so they may share boards with table 1. The extra pair sits out after the last table and then moves to table 1. With three board rounds they sit out for 3 boards.

10½ tables

Set up a 9 table Mitchell with table 10 sharing boards with table 1. The extra pair (EW 11) sit out for the first round and then move to table 1. EW move as usual up one table at each change and sit out after table 10. The boards move down one table but stay within the 9 table base movement. There are 9 rounds of 3 boards for 27 total. Only 9 of the 11 EW pairs sit out and each board is played 10 times.

11½ tables

Set up a 10 table Mitchell with table 11 sharing boards with table 1. The extra pair (EW 12) sit out for the first round and then move to table 1. EW move as usual up one table at each change and sit out after table 11. EW pairs must skip after round 5 just like a normal 10 table skip Mitchell. The boards move down one table but stay within the 10 table base movement. There are 10 rounds of 3 boards for 30 total. Only 10 of the 12 EW pairs sit out and each board is played 11 times.

This movement can be stopped after 9 rounds but not all boards are played the same number of times.

2 Table Appendix Mitchell movements

For this discussion the two table appendix Mitchell (*p 101*) has one really good application. It gives us 9 round movements for 11, 11½ and 12 tables playing 27 boards. Note they are all two winner movements.

Eleven tables

Set up a standard 9 table Mitchell movement with 3 boards on each table with set 1 on table 1. Table 10 is positioned next to table one where they can share boards on each round, starting with set 1 and playing the sets in ascending order. Table 11 uses a second duplicate set of boards starting with set 9 (25-27) and playing the sets in descending order.

The EW pairs move as in an ordinary Mitchell movement, up one table at each change. The boards in tables 1 to 9 move down one table as usual, the boards at table 10 being returned to table 1 before the change. Table 11 look after their own boards.

Twelve tables

For 12 tables we add another appendix table to the 11 table movement above. See 3 Table Appendix Mitchell (*p 111*) for more details. Add table 12 to the 11-table movement immediately above, positioning it next to 11 and the second set of boards. The 11 table movement proceeds exactly as above. For table 12, NS 12 remain stationary and EW 12 are a rover pair displacing an EW pair at each round, sending them to play at table 12 for that round. The board set played at table 12 is the same set played by the rover EW 12 but sharing is not needed as the boards for table 12 can be found in the second lot of boards used at table 11 (except for round 4 where tables 11 and 12 must share).

EW 12 Rover schedule including the rover seating and the table 12 board set.

Round	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sit	EW1	EW4	EW6	EW11	EW9	EW7	EW5	EW2	EW8
12 set	1	5	8	6	4	3	2	9	7

11½ tables

Using the 12 table movement above with pair 12 NS missing (therefore no table 12) gives an ideal movement for 11½ tables. The same rover schedule applies and no extra board sharing is needed. The rover pair may sit out on round 1 rather than displacing EW1.