

Play by Email

With the Play by Email (Pbem) feature, you can play matches against remote opponents, a turn at a time, as EBP automates the emailing process.

WHAT YOU NEED

To play via email, you and your opponents need an email address, a copy of EBP version 1.4 or newer, and the map on which you want to play. Please follow the courtesy notes as described further below.

QUICK START

If you don't want details, and just want to get going, here's what to do:

- 1) Run EBP, and go to the File, Display Settings pull-down menu.
- 2) In the Pbem area, enter your email address, and enter the name of your ISP's mail server (usually resembles smtp.comcast.net or outgoing.verizon.net). If your mail server needs authentication, fill in the username and password fields per your service provider's instructions.
- 3) In EBP, use the Game, Start pull-down menu, and select number of players, names, colors, etc. Each player must be given a unique name.
- 4) For each of your Pbem opponents, click on Type/Style, select "Human, Pbem" and input his/her email address. If prompted for a match name, accept the default.
- 5) In the Game Setup window, when ready to begin your Pbem match click OK.
- 6) If it is your turn, play. When a human opponent's turn occurs EBP will inform you it is ready to send the match to that person via email. Click OK to proceed, then exit EBP.
- 7) Check your incoming email as you do normally, and watch for an EBP Pbem message from an opponent. When it arrives, it is your turn. Click on the file attached to the message, and open it with EBP. Repeat steps 6 and 7 until someone wins. Have fun.

The steps above will work for most people; if you encounter difficulty, check the details below.

EMAIL SETUP

Before a Pbem match, each participant must tell EBP their email settings. To do so, use the File, Display Settings window and see the Play by Email area. At minimum the email, server and port number fields must be correctly filled in. See [Display Settings](#) for instructions.

Even if you've forgotten the name of the email account or address associated with your ISP (for example, Comcast), Pbem should be able to operate if you have another address at which to receive email (for example, Gmail).

EMAIL SELF-TEST

To be sure your email settings are functional, perform the following test. Via this test you'll send a test email to yourself from EBP.

- 1) First, be sure your Internet connection is operational and you are presently online.
- 2) In EBP choose the Game, Play by Email pull-down menu.
- 3) You may be prompted to install the Winsock control. Follow the on-screen information.

- 4) In the Pbem Control Window, choose the Options, Self-mail Test pull-down menu.
- 5) Emailing information will be displayed. If it looks proper, click OK.
- 6) SMTP status information will flash near the top of the Pbem Control Window. Watch for messages. A successful test will complete in less than a second, and show "Test emailed to" <your email address>.

A timeout message during send often means you have not correctly specified the name of your email server in Display Settings. Upon any error messages, verify your Internet service is connected, and check with your service provider that your email settings in the Display Settings window are proper. Correct improper information and retry.

To email via a system that requires SSL/TLS (Gmail is one), enable EBP's "Use SSL" checkbox and set the port number to 465 or as the email provider instructs; you will also need to fill in the Username and Password fields.

If problems persist, check your firewall is not blocking EBP (the default port is 25). Perhaps try a different computer.

If you cannot resolve the trouble, your email configuration and EBP are not compatible. Unfortunately with so many possible email systems and setups in existence, we cannot guarantee that all will be compatible, nor can we provide tech support for this beyond the FAQ at RailGameFans.com. If you know the failure is related to SMTP requirements imposed by your outgoing email service, for a small fee we may be able to provide you with suitable SMTP access limited to Pbem purposes. Details and availability are uncertain at the time of this writing, so check the FAQ at RailGameFans.com (search there for SMTP).

If the outbound test message process appeared OK, check for incoming email via your normal means (i.e. the inbox you regularly use for email). If a message titled Pbem self-test arrives properly, the test was a success, and you should be able to participate in a Pbem match. If the test message appears to have gone out, but does not arrive, check your spam filters. Some email receipt systems might filter out mail coming from EBP, so if you suspect that problem, retry the test after entering a different email address of yours in Display Settings.

MATCH SETUP

Before starting a Pbem match, use File, Load Map to open the game map on which you want to play. Each match participant must be licensed to use the map by having paid for their own copy. Next, to set up the match, use the Game, Start pull-down menu.

In the Game Setup window, choose the number of participants and enter the names of the players. Each player must be assigned a unique name. A Pbem match must have at least 2 and up to 6 human players; inclusion of AI (bot) players is acceptable.

For yourself in the Type/Style column, choose Human. For all other human players, scroll up to and choose "Human, Pbem". Avoid selecting Human, Remote. EBP will prompt you to enter an email address for each Pbem player; this is the address to which EBP will email the match so the remote opponent can take his turn. The addresses you enter will appear in the Pbem Control Window. Redo any incorrect by double clicking on them in the Pbem Control Window.

EBP automatically assigns a name for your match, and asks you to confirm it. EBP will include this name within the file name under which it saves the match and sends it to opponents as an email attachment. Use only letters, digits, underscores and hyphens in the name. Since participants might be playing in several different Pbem matches concurrently, choose a name unlikely to be confused with another: the name must not be the same as that of a Pbem match in which any of the participants are already playing.

START PLAY

When all settings look right, in the Game Setup window click OK. If the local human player gets the first turn, EBP will prompt for that turn to be taken. If a human-pbem player gets the first turn, EBP will email the match to that person. AI players will take their turns normally.

If the Pbem Control Window gets in the way of play, you can close it.

When an email is about to be sent, a message window will pop up and ask you to verify. In general, you should approve the request. If you cancel, to reinitiate the email sending process, click the OK (done) button. At the same time you approve the outbound email, you can enter a comment to add to the banter box; to enter multiple comments, hold down the Ctrl key when you click OK.

While an email is being sent, EBP will show the Pbem Control Window. The window will flash the SMTP email sending status. Be alert for error messages. Success is indicated by "Match emailed to..." or "Notice emailed to..." text. You can then close EBP.

EMAIL RECEIPT

After the remote player(s) have completed their turn(s), you should receive an email from one of those players prompting you to take your turn. The match will be attached to the email message. If you have established a "file association" to EBP.EXE for the .ebz file extension of saved games, you can click (or perhaps double click) on the file attachment so as to automatically invoke EBP, and load the attached game; you can then easily take your turn, and have EBP email it to the next person. The process of creating a "file association" varies depending on your version of Windows, so check online sources for instructions.

If you do not have a file association established, save to disk the file attached to the email. Then manually start EBP, and use File, Open Game to load that file from where you had saved it.

EVENT REVIEW

Once the Pbem match is loaded into EBP, if any events have occurred since your last turn, to bring you up-to-date EBP shows an "Event Review". Note that the event is not re-initiated, but merely displayed to you as information.

To close an Event Review window, simply click on it. If multiple events have occurred, each will pop up separately. After the Event Review, you can proceed normally with your turn.

AUTOMOVE

EBP's automove feature can speed up matches. When you engage automove (without its wait-to-build option), EBP will automatically move your train for you, and even do so if your turn occurs when the Pbem match is operating on an opponent's computer. In that way, your turn is processed without the need for an email to you, and the next opponent sooner gets a turn. If automove reaches your destination or otherwise turns itself off, you will be emailed the match as usual.

If all human participants have their automove engaged at the same time, several rounds could be processed within a few seconds, thereby reducing the total number of emails that are sent.

Automove turns itself off upon any event, while Automove Express turns off only for events that cause you to lose a load or track, or certain other events for which players often want to replan their route. If an AI bot takes a turn before email to the next human player and draws an event, to re-enable Automove Express 1) at the "ready to send match via email" message click Cancel, 2) choose the Turn, Automove Reengage pull-down menu, and 3) click the OK (done) button to resume sending the match via email.

EVENT DIFFERENCES

As compared to play on one computer, during Pbem matches you may observe minor differences in how EBP handles events. For example, events that cannot be resolved immediately upon occurring, such as Derailment and Supply Scandal that cause/allow an opponent the choice of a load to lose/pickup, are logged for resolution the next time that opponent receives the match via email and takes his turn.

MULTIPLE PBEM MATCHES

EBP imposes no quantity limit on the number of Pbem matches in which you may participate concurrently. To help remind yourself of your plans in a match, click on "PM" in your contracts area. The PM feature lets you enter a brief private message that is saved with the match; when your turn comes around later, you can view the message by clicking on PM again. Your PM is not visible to opponents.

MAIL RECEIPT FAILURE

If during the match a participant does not timely receive an email, thereby holding up the match, the last person to have taken a turn can resend the match. To do so, use the Game, Play by Email pull-down menu, then in the Pbem Control Window, choose the Match, Remail menu. A list of Pbem matches will appear. Select the one you wish to resend, and when prompted, verify it is being sent to the correct email address.

CALC DELAY

The Match, Calc delay pull-down menu displays for each player the total time elapsed between when the match was sent to the player, and when he began taking his turn. It is a measure of how much delay each participant has introduced into the match. The features helps you learn if opponents are playing at a pace you prefer.

NUDGE

The frequency with which each Pbem player takes a turn is determined by the pace of the participants. If all participants take turns quickly, as soon as the email arrives, a Pbem match can be completed the same day it started. Typically, however, people are not always available to take their turn immediately, so most Pbem matches extend over several days, or even weeks.

If a match bogs down, running slower than usual for the participants, and no one has indicated a delay reason, consider the Nudge feature. Nudge sends an automated "please take your turn" reminder to all opponents. To Nudge, run EBP, select the Game, Play by Email pull-down menu, and in the Pbem Control Window choose the Match, Nudge menu. You'll be presented with a list of Pbem matches; choose the one you want to nudge. EBP will let you add a brief comment to the nudge message it sends.

Do not nudge excessively or without reason. If someone stops participating without explanation, you can replace him with an AI bot as described below. Since EBP supports multiple concurrent Pbem matches, as an alternate you can start another match with other people.

PLAYER DROPOUT

If a human player ceases to participate, when the turn comes around to the missing player someone else can fill in. The most recent human player to take a turn should reload the match as he received it, access the Pbem Control Window, double click to edit the appropriate email address and fill in the address of the substitute. Then use the Control Window's Match, Remail menu. If you prefer to instead substitute an AI player, use the main window's Game, Edit Setup menu and change the missing Pbem player's type into one of the AIs. After doing so, click the main window's OK (done) button to proceed with the match.

COURTESY

Before including people in a Pbem match, we recommend as courtesy you contact them in advance to check their interest and availability to participate. It is also a good opportunity to ask what color they prefer to play in the match.

In advance of accepting an invitation into a Pbem match, you should verify that your email system is compatible. To verify, perform the Email Self-Test described near the start of this topic.

We recommend that participants who are going to be away or otherwise unable to take turns for a longer-than-usual period post a message about it into the banter box. Something like, "Taking a long weekend... will resume the match Tuesday" is a polite notice to your opponents. To add banter, right click on the banter box.

By using EBP's Pbem feature you agree to accept all responsibility for that use: it is a form of email and is subject to rules and regulations regarding such. Use of the Pbem feature other than as described herein will subject your EBP registration to cancellation. If someone abuses the Pbem feature, and refuses to stop, we recommend you report the problem to that person's Internet Service Provider.

NOTES

Unexpected differences in match operation from one participant to another might be due to different EBP versions. Though closely-numbered versions are highly compatible, for optimal performance all participants should employ the same EBP version.

If you have established in Windows an .ebz file association to EBP.EXE, you can open the email attachment directly with EBP, take your turn, and close EBP quickly, often in less than a minute total.

If you want to receive Pbem at multiple email addresses (such as both work and home), edit your email info via the Pbem Control Window and enter those addresses separated by a comma. For each given round of the match, after you take your turn upon receipt of the match at one email address, be sure not to take it again when you check your email at your other address.

For a match involving more than one person at the same computer, for clarity we recommend you use different email addresses for each such participant. If multiple people need to share the same email address, EBP allows it (just enter the same email address for more than one player), but you must then watch to ensure the proper person takes their turn. Incoming Pbem messages state the name of the player whose turn it is.

Before the Pbem match is emailed, EBP compresses it to reduce size. The file sizes are generally small (typically less than 20K) and therefore suitable even for users with Internet access via relatively slow dialup. If the sender's computer lacks file compression ability, EBP will automatically email the saved game as an .ebg file rather than .ebz.

For Remail and Nudge purposes, EBP preserves a copy of each Pbem match in a cache. To erase all such files more than a week old, in the Pbem Control Window use the Options, Clear cache pull-down menu.

Depending on your operating system settings, for Pbem to work you may need to run EBP in your operating system's Administrator mode. How to engage Administrator mode for an application can vary, so if you need details, please do a search online.

During a Pbem match, to reopen the Pbem Control Window, click the Pbem icon. To move the icon to a different corner, right click on it and drag it to the desired corner; EBP remembers your choice separately for each map.

For time stamps of Pbem matches, EBP employs Universal Time, also called Greenwich Mean Time. Such time stamps are suffixed with the letters UT. Universal Time provides a consistent time reference for the match in case participants are located in different time zones. To convert UT to United States Eastern Standard Time, subtract 5 hours.

Pbem cannot be used in the same match as EBP's live Web Play features.

Blitz Play cannot be used in Pbem matches.

If you prefer to play simultaneously in real time, use EBP's live Web Play feature.