



Sheffield Bridge Club

Customs and Etiquette - part III

Things that Can Go Wrong...

With the best will in the world things do go wrong at the bridge table, this is always when someone makes a genuine mistake, something we all do from time to time. Matters are often simply resolved between those at the table but more formal resolution is the job of the Tournament Director and there is one present at every play session for this purpose. If you need assistance from the TD, inform partner and opponents and call for the TD. Bear in mind that your opponents might not know the Laws as well as they may appear to.

The most common mistakes are listed here:

Exposed Card

When a card is exposed, there is the natural temptation to replace it quickly in the hand hoping no-one had seen it. Please don't - just leave the exposed card face up on the table. It has to be played at the next legal opportunity. You now need to call the TD for advice.

Unintended Call

If you pull out the wrong bid by mistake you are allowed to change it to the correct one. Only "accidents" can be corrected, not a change of mind.

Corrections can be made up to the point where your partner makes their next bid but you should try to change it as soon as you realise the error. Your left-hand opponent will be allowed to change any call made subsequent to yours. After partner has bid you must "live with it" and not draw attention to the mistake.

Unintended Play of a Card

If you have a slip of the tongue when calling for a card from dummy, call the TD as it may be possible for it to be changed. If an unintended card is played by a defender, it must remain played if it was held in such a position that his partner could have seen it if he was looking. The TD should be called for advice on whether a card is deemed to have been played.

Your Opponent makes an Insufficient Bid

You are entitled to accept an insufficient bid and in many cases would be wise to do so, particularly if you wish to compete further in the auction. You continue from the new low level set by your opponent and you might even have to borrow bidding cards to repeat previous bids. When there has been an insufficient bid the TD should be called for advice.

Your Opponent calls out of turn

You may accept an out-of-sequence call but you are rarely advised to do so. It is likely that you have been damaged by the transgression in a way that is not at first obvious. The TD will restore equity in the best way possible. For the long term good of all, it is better not to ignore these irregularities and pretend that

they do not matter. If there is little damage the restraints will not be onerous. But if it is more serious, they will ensure that you do not suffer because of your opponents' mistake.

Making a Claim Before All Cards Have Been Played

It is bad manners to prolong play unnecessarily but be certain to say clearly how you would have played the rest of the tricks when you make a claim. If you are challenged stop all play and ask the TD for help. They will make a ruling based upon what logically could have happened, not upon what you hoped, but did not state would have happened.

A common mistake is for declarer to claim the remaining tricks when one or more trumps is still outstanding. In such cases declarer should claim by saying 'drawing trumps first' or similar.

Inventing your own rules

The Laws of Duplicate Bridge place the whole emphasis upon identifying irregularities and rectifying the situation so that equity is restored as much as it can be. Some of the rulings occasionally appear harsh or lax but generally represent a fine balance between fairness without too much complexity.

Players who say that playing to the rules is unimportant are really suggesting you should play according to their rules invented as situations arise. The present regulations have been adapted over many years to suit all levels of play. It is easier to keep to the established rules.