



Sheffield Bridge Club

Customs and Etiquette - part II

Sheffield Bridge Club, like most bridge clubs, adopts English Bridge Union Regulations in addition to the worldwide Laws of Duplicate Bridge. It is expected that experienced players will advise less experienced players on procedure in a polite friendly way and be supportive. If something goes wrong, the TD should be called to advise and to put right anything that has gone wrong. The Laws and Regulations are rarely punitive but they enable the game to be played in a way that is fair to all.

Bidding

It is ideal for you and your partner to have a “convention or system card” summarising your system, leads and carding methods - otherwise brief details can be summarised on the front of the scorecard. These should be made available to opponents for their information.

Bidding Boxes

When bidding, it is recommended to do your thinking before reaching for the bidding box. Players sometimes “butterfly” over a box. This shows indecisiveness and suggests that you have a number of possible bids.

“**STOP**” - is used when a “jump” bid is made; a bid above the minimum level required. Examples include a jump raise of partner’s suit or an opening bid at the 2 or 3 level. When making the bid, place the STOP card on the table and make the bid. Leave the card in place for ten seconds before replacing it in the bidding box, during this time the next player is not allowed to make their bid.

“**ALERT**” - When partner makes a convention bid, you display the “ALERT” card to tell the opposition that the bid is not “natural” i.e. does not mean what it says but means something else. Secret coded bidding systems are not allowed. Opponents are entitled to know the meaning of your bids and vice versa.

It is recommended that you only ask for explanations of opponents’ calls during the auction if they may affect your subsequent calls. Otherwise, it is best to wait until the end of the auction before enquiring. When you ask, it is best to ask for the bid to be explained rather than ask if it is this or that.

A few bids are “announced” rather than alerted. For example, the partner of the player making the bid will announce the point range for a 1NT opening bid, Stayman and transfers in response to 1NT. This announcement should be made immediately after the bid is made.

Partnership Understandings

All agreements must be fully disclosed to opponents. However, a player may “misbid”, either by accident, or occasionally even deliberately, providing such a deviation is as much a surprise to their partner as to their opponents. The only way to communicate with partner is through legal bids and play.

Players should not wriggle on their seats, bemoan their fate or display uncertainty of what they are doing. It is easy to influence a partner or mislead an opponent inadvertently.

Be careful of gratuitous remarks, comments, approval, disapproval, uncertainty, unexpected alerts, failure to alert, unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement

or mannerisms, any form of body language or eye contact. They all give information and put pressure on partner.

Hesitations

Hesitations in the bidding are quite common. It can take time to decide upon what you want to do. There is nothing wrong with this but partner must not take any advantage from knowing that you have something to think about. Partner must not take your hesitation into account when deciding on their course of action.

If you think that opponents may have transgressed in any way you should call the TD. If they are busy then play on and “reserve your right” to call the TD at the end of the play of the board” but please do it politely.

The Play

The play of a contract is a contest between two defenders and one declarer. Dummy does nothing in particular. They place a card in the played position as instructed by the declarer, playing strictly by the rules they must not assume which card is to be played but must wait for an instruction even when there is only one option. In practice in informal sessions this rule is often relaxed a little. They also keep a count of tricks won or lost but do little else. They can check that Declarer has not revoked immediately after a card has been played.

The dummy has to follow declarer’s instruction without guiding them. Any temptation to look at anyone else’s hand should be resisted. Dummy can warn declarer about playing from the wrong hand, ask about a possible revoke and say that they the last quitted trick is the wrong way round. Otherwise, they should just relax and let the declarer get on with the job.

At the end of play all players make certain that the result and score are agreed and entered on the Bridgmate or traveller. North (or South) enters the information and gets an opponent to check for accuracy. They should show all players the scores.

Cards should be lightly shuffled before being returned to the board. This is reputedly to prevent information on how the play proceeded becoming available to the next table.

Further Advice

If you are on opening lead you may ask for explanations of your opponents’ bidding before selecting your lead. If you have no questions then select your opening lead and place it face down on the table and ask your partner if they have any questions.

If you are a defender you may check with your partner if he does not follow suit.

If you are declarer or dummy and your partner has given the wrong explanation to a convention bid you should tell your opponents before they make the opening lead.

If you are defending and your partner has given a wrong explanation of a bid you must say nothing until the end of the play when you then inform declarer.