

Playing at Clubs

Bridge is a great game. It can be lots of fun playing casually with friends, family around the table, at clubs, and even at international levels. One of the great things about the game is that it can be enjoyed by so many different levels of players. In the bridge community there are individuals who take the game casually and those who take it very seriously (some too seriously). There are laws and rules, along with what is etiquette, and sometimes these are not the same. Without a doubt, there will be times when you will inadvertently break some rules, there will be rules you will not even know are rules, and sometimes you will follow the rules, and some people may think that it is bad etiquette. Only experience will help you figure this out. So don't worry when you have an issue at the table, and also be mindful that when an opponent has done something inappropriate, we've all been there.

It is my hope that this will help you make one less mistake than I have. Also, please keep in mind that Monday night is a casual, fun, learning environment so there are many things we allow you to get away with at the Monday night club which is not allowed to at a regular club game. Hopefully this list will help you be prepared to play in these games.

Cell Phones – most clubs will give you a warning, some a penalty if they ring. Most clubs will give you a penalty if you pick up. This is considered highly rude.

Directors – these people are your friends, be nice to them. You should call them over when there is a problem, don't bully people or make suggestions on what should happen, nor let them tell you what should happen. If you have a penalty card, either yours or the opponents call the director over. That is what they are paid for.

Directors are like referees or umpires, sometimes they make an incorrect decision, and yelling at them doesn't help. You can ask for a committee, which is a group of your peers to review the decision. The committee may or may not agree with the decision, but certainly it is a fairer forum.

Using Different Designations for the same Call – this is something that happens often, but you should try really hard not to. For example, lots of times people will, "I bid one club," and then on the next board they will say, "a club". Both are incorrect. Proper bidding is a number and a suit or NT, no more, no less. "1c", "3NT" is appropriate. One could be hiding information by making the call in different ways. However, please keep in mind that, etiquette wise, its probably overly picky and fussy wrong to call the director.

This also affect how you use other cards, such as the stop card, announcing skip bids and no more clubs partner.

Bidding Boxes – I like them, I think less information is accidentally given, but don't slap your cards. Don't touch your bid before you are sure on what you are going to bid.

Stop card/call – either use it or don't use it. Unfortunately 50% of directors seem to get the stop card rule wrong. So while I personally think the card should just be removed from the box, it might be right to use it. Once you have decided to make a jump bid and you know what the bid is, pull out the stop card and place it on the table, then pull out your bid, pick up the stop card and place it back in the box. The stop card will be out for more than a second. Many people leave it out for a long time, this is incorrect. If you use the stop card, you should not also verbally say stop or skip bid.

Verbal Stop – some people do not use the stop card and instead say "Stop", "Skip Bid", "Skip Bid please wait", or others. It doesn't matter what you say but you must say the same thing all the time. Personally, I don't like the verbal as you give away too much in your voice inflection, which clearly your partner can read better than the opponents.

"No more partner?" – this one really bothers me I have never seen, including myself anyone use this right 100% of the time. You are allowed to ask partner if they are out of a suit, but you then should have to do it all the time, even on the last card showing out. I just wouldn't do it. But then again I think this rule should be changed by the ACBL.

Timing – this is one of the hardest parts of playing bridge for beginners. It is your responsibility to keep up with the speed of the game. Not only does it cause havoc if you are going too slow, but you may end up keeping people late. Be conscientious of how much time is allotted and what is left. If the opponents are going to slow, when it is your turn to bid or play, you can say can you please pick up the pace, we are running low on time. Don't be mean, just let them know, they might not realize the situation.

Commenting at the table –

- ❖ Don't do it.
- ❖ Don't comment on your play.
- ❖ Don't comment on the opponents' play.
- ❖ Don't comment on your partner's play.
- ❖ Don't comment on if the score was good or bad.
- ❖ Don't talk during the hand or bidding.

If you have something important enough to say, write it down and mention it after the session or during the break. If you can't remember, then really was it important enough to say?

BRIDGE ETIQUETTE

It is always nice to sit down at a bridge table and play with friendly people. Etiquette is generally defined as conventional requirements as to social behavior. The popularity and universality of the game of bridge relies heavily upon the players being well-mannered and courteous. This attitude towards each and every player is expected and should be maintained at all times. Unfortunately, this is not the case. We are only humans with emotions and we can not be self-disciplined at all times under all circumstances.

We have all met those rude and obnoxious players in our bridge past. No one has ever escaped that certain look, that certain irony in the voice, that gesture which disturbs us emotionally and mentally. It is possible that we have been guilty of doing the same. Perhaps we let our emotions get the better of us, and we simply became rude and obnoxious. If we catch ourselves being less than polite, then that is the time to exercise self-discipline. Take a deep breath, go get ourselves a cup of free coffee, or excuse ourselves and make that trip to the bathroom.

Therefore, if we all make that special effort to be courteous to one and all, perhaps the game, the play and the atmosphere can become more enjoyable for one and all.

Following are some articles to look at, read, take to heart, heed and adhere to. Please take the time to read them. Some involve the Laws of Contract Bridge because this part of the game is taken seriously by the sponsoring organizations. The policy of Zero Tolerance has been introduced. There are civilized and heated discussions about this policy. However, using your common sense and courtesy, undermined by reading the following, will permit you to become that nice Bridge Lady or that wonderful Bridge Gentleman.

Concentration - An essential for the Declarer

Perhaps as much as 50% of your success at bridge depends on your ability to keep your mind on the game. If you are not paying attention at all time, crucial details may escape your notice, like how many trump cards have been played.

Most of the mistakes an expert player makes are lapses in concentration, which he knows to avoid. The difference between the expert and the average player, however, is that the expert keeps his avoidable errors to a minimum.

Following are some ways to help improve your concentration:

Do not spend too much time on the easy hands.
Play somewhat in tempo, but avoid playing too hastily.
Study hands in advance that demand attention to details.

Save your mental energy by relaxing between hands during dealing.

Do not follow the dummy play like Mr. Eagle Eye. Relax and let partner play.

Do not tire yourself out trying to solve a problem when it is purely guess-work.

If a card is played or discarded unexpectedly, take a breath and re-think, recoup.

Conduct - An essential element of behavior at the Bridge Table

A player should maintain at all times a courteous attitude toward his **Partner and his Opponents**. He should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or his partner, or any remark or action that might interfere with the enjoyment of another player of the game.

As a matter of courtesy, a player, by the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge, should refrain from:

1. paying insufficient attention.
2. making gratuitous comments during the play as to the auction or the adequacy of the contract.
3. detaching a card from his/her hand before it is his/her turn to play.
4. concealing his/her cards from the sight of other players.
5. arranging the cards he/she has played to previous tricks in a disorderly manner or mixing his/her cards together before the result of the deal has been agreed upon.
6. making a questionable claim or concession.
7. prolonging the play unnecessarily.
8. using different designations for the same call.

"A Club" or "I will bid a Club"
are incorrect and not allowed

One Club - is the only proper form

9. indicating any approval or disapproval of a call, bid or play.
10. indicating the expectation or intention of winning or losing a trick before play to that trick has been completed.
11. commenting or acting during the auction or play to call attention to a significant incident thereof, or to the state of the score, or to the number of tricks that will be required for success.
12. looking intently at any other player during the auction or play, or at the hand of another player for the purpose of seeing his/her cards or observing the place from which he/she draws a card.
13. varying the normal tempo of bidding or play for the purpose of disconcerting the other players.
14. leaving the table needlessly before the round is called.