

District 11, in collaboration with the ACBL, actively promotes and supports ethical behavior to maximize fun and enjoyment in duplicate bridge at all levels. We offer this not only for the newest District 11 bridge player, but also for the experienced tournament veteran. We thank the ACBL and the Canterbury Regional Bridge Association of New Zealand (<http://www.canterburyregionalbridge.co.nz/>) for source material used in this Handbook.

### **Zero Tolerance**

ACBL policy - good bridge and good fun go hand in hand when we respect each other and behave accordingly. Good behavior is a prerequisite for good proprieties & ethics.

The ACBL Board of Directors and Management are committed to improving acceptable player behavior at all times. This commitment is fully expressed with the Zero Tolerance Policy. The ZT policy outlines what we expect of all players during NABCs and other ACBL-sponsored events, as well as in the playing area before and after each session. The ultimate purpose of the ZT policy is to create a more pleasant atmosphere. A player should maintain at all times a courteous attitude toward partner and the opponents. A player should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player, or that might interfere with another player's enjoyment of the game.

Below are some examples of commendable behavior, which, while not required, significantly contribute to the improved atmosphere:

- Being a good host or guest at the table.
- Greeting others in a friendly manner.
- Praising the bidding and/or play of the opponents.
- Having two clearly complete convention cards readily available to the opponents. (This one is a regulation, not just a nicety.)

The following lists some examples of behavior which will not be tolerated:

- Badgering, rudeness, insinuations, profanity, threats or violence.
- Negative comments concerning opponents' or partner's play or bidding.
- Constant and gratuitous lessons and analyses at the table.
- Loud and disruptive arguing with a director's ruling.

If a player at the table behaves in an unacceptable manner, call the director immediately.

Law 74A specifically prohibits annoying behavior, embarrassing remarks or any other conduct which might interfere with the enjoyment of the game. Law 91A gives the director the authority to assess disciplinary penalties. A Zero Tolerance Report Form is available for players to report incidents that occur away from the table and for directors to document complaints and action taken.

The ACBL Zero Tolerance Policy can be found at:

[http://www.acbl.org/tournaments\\_page/ethics-and-discipline/zero-tolerance-policy/](http://www.acbl.org/tournaments_page/ethics-and-discipline/zero-tolerance-policy/)

### **Active Ethics**

All of us must go out of our way to behave ethically in every situation. The ACBL describes four dimensions for Active Ethics:

- Principle of Full Disclosure
- Social Behavior
- Slow Play
- Statement on Conventions

Actively ethical bridge players do everything they can within the scope of the game to defeat their opponent at the bridge table while making that experience an otherwise enjoyable one for them.

**A** primary objective of the ACBL is to  
**C**ontinue the concerted effort begun at  
**T**he Fall, 1986 Atlanta NABC to try to  
**I**nstill in all players the concept that  
**V**igorous efforts should be made to insure  
**E**quity and enjoyment are benchmarks of Bridge.

**E**very player should strive to make sure  
**T**hat opponents have in no way been  
**H**armed through incomplete or misleading  
**I**nformation as to the meanings of his pair's  
**C**onventional calls and treatments.  
**A**n aggressive approach along these  
**L**ines on the part of each and every  
**I**ndividual will do much to make sure  
**T**hat Bridge remains the game that  
**Y**ou enjoy so much.

### **Principle of Full Disclosure**

The philosophy of active ethics tells us skill, flair and normal playing luck solely determine results. Actively ethical partnerships take pains to ensure that their opponents are fully informed.

A major tenet of active ethics is the principle of full disclosure. This means that all information available to your partnership must be made available to your opponents.

Let's take a look at weak two bids from the point of view of full disclosure. When an established partnership opens a weak two bid, they have a great deal of information of which their opponents are not aware. The convention card discloses the point range, but little else. However, the partners are aware of the range of hands on which the bid can be made (discipline?, suit quality requirements?, five-or-seven card suits allowed?, side four-card major ok?, void ok?, positional variations?, etc). Full disclosure requires that all these inferences, restrictions and tendencies be made known to any opponent who enquires about their style.

If you are interested in knowing these things about your opponent's bid, merely say to the bidder's partner, "Would you tell me more about your style?" You may use the style inquiry' to ask about any call your opponent makes.

The actively ethical player will often go beyond what is technically required in volunteering information to the opponents. Quite often, the declaring side in an actively ethical partnership will volunteer such information before the opening lead is made. (But remember, when there has been misinformation given, such as a failure to alert or a mis-alert, there is a LEGAL obligation on the player whose partner misinformed the opponents. S/He,

the bidder, must give the opponents the correct information at the end of the auction if her/his side is the declaring side or at the end of the play if her/his side is defending.)

New players or infrequent partnerships usually will not have understandings about the items discussed here and, of course, it will be perfectly proper for them to reply, "We have no agreement as to style."

### **Social Behavior**

Active ethics enables players to compete on equal terms. In addition, the actively ethical player contributes to the enjoyment of all players by continuously striving to maintain a courteous attitude toward both his opponents and his partner and by avoiding any behavior that would make anyone uncomfortable. These social attributes are VITAL to the game of bridge and duplicate bridge.

### **Slow Play**

Failure to finish on time can do a great deal to chase players away from the game and is extremely distressing to waiting players. Bridge is a timed event. If a pair takes more than their share of the allotted time for each round, they are inconveniencing their fellow competitors as well as gaining an unfair advantage over them. When a pair has fallen behind it is incumbent on them to make up the time lost as quickly as possible whether at fault or not.

The actively ethical player makes a concerted effort to catch up when they have fallen behind, regardless of the reason for their lateness. All players are expected to develop this good habit.

Remember: Slow play is subject to penalty, and the penalties are well earned when slow pairs disrupt the normal progression of the game.

Additionally, players should be available to start each subsequent round promptly, avoiding wherever possible, being late to a table for non-bridge reasons.

At the discretion of the TD, slow play penalties will be deemed to be either disciplinary (and not appealable) or procedural. If the latter, appeals committees should tend strongly to reject all routine appeals against slow play penalties. When they do deny such an appeal, they should consider imposing an additional penalty for a frivolous appeal. The burden is on the appellant to demonstrate that some unusual circumstance makes the penalty inappropriate.

### **Statement on Conventions**

The latest version of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge defines a convention as a call that, by partnership agreement, conveys a meaning other than willingness to play in the denomination named (or in the last denomination named), or high-card strength or length (three cards or more) there.

All ACBL events are "governed" by the appropriate convention chart which lists those conventions permitted in the event. Conventions not included on the chart are not permitted in the event.

Part of the "right" to use a convention is the responsibility of deciding when it applies in probable auctions. The opponents may be entitled to redress if you did not originally have a clear understanding with your partner of when and how to use a convention you are playing.

For example, a partnership that chooses to play conventional bids over opponent's notrump opening bids is expected to have discussed at least the following:

Does it apply over strong notrumps?

Does it apply over weak notrumps?

Does it apply in the direct seat?

Does it apply in the balancing chair? (Aka pass-out seat – the player to make the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last pass.

Does it apply when used by a passed hand?

We all occasionally encounter situations where we are not sure what partner's bidding means. There exists an added responsibility if that uncertainty arises from a convention you and your partner have agreed to play. In these situations, you should tell your opponents all you know. Sometimes, the director will even ask you or your partner to step away from the table so that the opponents can talk openly with the remaining player.

Actively ethical players do everything possible in these situations to bring their opponents back to even terms — to remove any possible disadvantage accruing to them from their side's failure to have a complete conventional understanding.

### **Need to Know Tips for Duplicate Bridge at ANY LEVEL:**

- Do not engage in extraneous conversation or talk at the table once you have taken your cards from the boards. Even in an informal game, your vocabulary for the auction is limited to 15 words: pass, the numbers one through seven, double, redouble, spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs and notrump. "I bid one club," contains two too many words. Slow passes, fast doubles, loud overcalls, etc., are not acceptable behavior in duplicate. Bidding boxes are used in all NABC games, so many of these problems are avoided.
- When you are the dummy, you have limited rights. It is unacceptable for the dummy to go around the table and look at declarer's hand (or exchange hands with partner). The dummy is an active participant at the table charged with turning cards for partner and preventing partner from revoking or leading from the wrong hand.
- Do not write down the contract in your convention card until there have been three consecutive passes. Writing it down prematurely is tantamount to telling your partner you want him to pass.
- Make your opening lead face down on the table. At the same time you should say, "Questions, partner?" If it is not your lead, your partner and/or the opponents will let you know.
- Be a good partner. Regard your partner with respect. Remind yourself that for the duration of the session, your partner is your best friend and part of your responsibility is to make his life and his decisions as easy as possible. Always root for your partner to do the right thing. If he misplays or mis-guesses, sympathize and console — he hurts worse than you do. That not only makes the game more pleasant, it makes it more rewarding in both a personal and Need to Know Duplicate Tips 5 practical way. Your partner will play better, you will play better, your results will be better and you will more closely approach harmony with life and bridge.
- Play up to speed. When polling players to find what their biggest bridge pet peeve is, slow play was unequivocally the winner! You are given seven minutes per board, which should be plenty of time for even the toughest hands. It is irritating to wait for your opponents to arrive at the table while the clock is ticking and your time for playing the next round is being eaten up. Equally, if not more irritating, is to be East–West and have to wait for people you are following to vacate your chairs. It is awkward to stand and wait without people thinking you are watching other boards being played. Remember, no one cares how well you play, only how fast!
- Bid in tempo. Bidding too fast or thinking too long before bidding could send unauthorized messages to your partner. If you pass too quickly, it seems that you have no interest in this deal. If you pause for a long time, you probably have choices to make and can't decide which is the best action.
- Play in tempo. If you take too long to play a card, the message is that you have a problem. Never hesitate before playing a singleton. You have no problem, and planting the idea that you do is highly unethical.
- Keep it in the past/No postmortems. You can't afford to use mental energy rehashing the past. Put aside a bad result and start fresh with the next 13 cards. Successful partnerships will discuss difficult hands and situations where something went wrong after the session and in private.
- Practice active ethics. A primary objective of the ACBL is to instill in all players the concept that vigorous efforts should be made to provide equity in bridge. Every player should take pains to make sure that the opponents have

in no way been harmed through incomplete or misleading information as to the meaning of conventional calls and treatments. An aggressive approach along these lines on the part of each individual will do much to make sure that bridge remains a game that is enjoyed so much by all.

- Call the director. Many newcomers are afraid to call the director because they fear it makes the game unfriendly. The director's job is to alleviate any strain there is or may develop, actually making the game more fun. By calling, you will ensure the game is fair for everybody, not just you and your opponents. Duplicate bridge is like basketball — the director must touch the ball to get it back into play.

### **Bidding Boxes**

You will find bidding boxes on all of the card tables. These devices permit silent bidding. To make a call, the player takes the appropriate card from a box, filled with cards designating all possible bids and calls, and places it on the table in front of him. All bidding cards remain on the table until the auction is concluded. This provides an instant review of the bidding and eliminates the possibility of mishearing a call. (See Alerts, Announcements and Skip Bids for more information on using bidding boxes with these requirements.)

### **The Convention Card**

Before you play, you and your partner need to fill out a convention card. A convention card is just that: a card that shows the conventions you use along with your general approach to bidding.

The convention card serves 2 purposes:

One, it tells your opponents what you play. (They, by the way, not you, are the only people entitled to look at it during the game, though clubs are somewhat lenient about this rule for the new player.)

Two, making out a card allows you and your partner to get your understandings straight. Many longtime partnerships have improved just on this alone.

At first sight, the card can be intimidating. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance from an I/N tournament director or a New Player Services member. New players may prefer to use the "Fat Free Card" which is simplified and can be found in the I/N area. Unusual conventions are shown in red on the card and need to be Alerted. Bids shown in blue require an Announcement.

### **Alerts, Announcements and Skip Bids**

When we make a conventional call partner must immediately say, "Alert." Partner volunteers no further explanations. Either opponent may then, at their proper turn, inquire as to the meaning of the Alert. When an opponent asks you about an Alert, you should make available all the information your partnership has about the call. This is the **principle of full disclosure**. The name of a convention is not an explanation and may be taken by your opponents as an attempt to intimidate them. If you are questioned about a call that your partner has made and you have no agreement, it is proper to reply "We have no agreement as to style." If partner makes a mistaken explanation, an incorrect Alert or fails to Alert, the declarer or dummy must notify the opponents and call the director after the final pass. A defender facing the same situation must notify the opponents and call the director after the play ends.

An Announcement is required in 4 situations. This tells the opponents directly the meaning of partner's call:

1. State the range (e.g., "15 to 17") after all opening 1NT bids,
2. Say "transfer" after a ♦ or ♥ bid which transfers to ♥s or ♠s at any level in response to a notrump opening bid, overcall or after opener's natural notrump rebid,
3. Say "forcing" or "semi-forcing" after a 1NT forcing or semiforcing response to a 1♠ or 1♥ opening bid,
4. Say "could be short" after all non-forcing opening bids of 1♣ or 1♦ which may be fewer than 3 cards.

## Skip Bid Warning

Another duplicate novelty is the Skip Bid Warning, used whenever you “skip” the bidding — when you open at the two level, for example. You either say, “Skip bid, please wait,” or use the red “Stop” card in the bidding box. Put the red “Stop” card on the table, make your bid, and remove the “Stop” card immediately. The opponent waits 10 seconds before bidding. This gives the opponent an opportunity to recover from the “surprise” of your jump and prevents the “*fast pass.*” (*Translation: I may have been surprised, but I didn’t have anything to bid anyway!*)

## Claims

“Play it out!” is a common request when someone attempts to claim. Law 68 is very clear that once a claim or concession is made that **all play must cease**. If done properly, claims save time and energy. The proper way to claim is to face your hand and state your line of play. You must be very specific. If there are trump cards out, be certain to mention that and how you plan to deal with them. Don’t be afraid to say you don’t understand or don’t agree with the claim, but don’t get into a confrontation with the claimer. Call the director. It is possible that the claim is Invalid.

In a contested claim, the director asks the claimer to repeat his claim. Then the director requires all players to face their remaining cards. Once that is accomplished, the director will hear the opponents’ objection to the claim and determine whether the claim is valid or invalid. If the claim is not valid, any tricks that could have been lost by any normal line of play will be awarded to the opponent. Normal play includes play that is careless or inferior for the class of player, but not irrational.

## Appeals

An appeal is a request for a review of a director’s ruling. Any ruling by a director may be appealed, but an appeals committee does not have the authority to overrule the director on a point of bridge law or a bridge regulation.

## Kibitzing

A spectator in bridge is called a kibitzer. Kibitzing is an interesting and fun way to learn from the experts, but there are rules of etiquette that must be followed. The kibitzer’s etiquette comes from “The Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge”.

## SPECTATORS

### A. Conduct During Bidding or Play

1. One Hand Only — A spectator should not look at the cards of more than one player, except by permission.
2. Personal Reaction — A spectator must not display any reaction to the bidding or play while a hand is in progress.
3. Mannerisms or Remarks — During the round, a spectator must refrain from mannerisms or remarks of any kind (including a conversation with a player).
4. Consideration for Players — A spectator must not in any way disturb a player.

### B. Spectator Participation

A spectator may not call attention to any irregularity or mistake, nor speak on any question of fact or law, except by request of the director.

## LAWS OF DUPLICATE BRIDGE

The Laws of Duplicate Bridge can be found at:

<http://www.acbl.org/acbl-content/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Laws-of-Duplicate-Bridge.pdf>

There are 93 laws (rules) in Bridge.

(Regulations are updated annually and Directors are current with those changes).

- Club directors may apply some laws leniently. However, it is good to learn about the laws right from the start.

- The aim of the laws is to provide **rectification** for infractions, not penalties. Rectification means ruling to obtain the most likely result from the board had the infraction not occurred (this makes it fairer for you and the rest of the field). Rectification is sometimes referred to as ‘restoring equity’.
- If equity cannot be restored, (e.g. if the boards are played at the wrong table because they have got out of order), pairs are awarded a percentage score – 40%, 50% or 60% – depending on who is at fault. A 50% score gives players an average board.

### **Duplicate Bridge Ethics - Specific Examples**

The following examples help players new to duplicate bridge enjoy this great game with full understanding of the proprieties and responsibilities. We recognize Laws and Regulations change periodically, and these changes always supersede this handbook.

### **BIDDING**

If you make an incorrect bid, don't try to correct it. Call the Director.

- You may be able to change a mistaken/ inadvertent bid if you call the Director immediately.
- If you aren't sure about the meaning of an opponent's bid (alerted or not) you are allowed to ask. However:
  1. You have to wait until it is your turn to bid
  2. Ask before you bid, "What is your agreement about this bid?"
  3. Address question to the partner of the player who made the bid.
- Explanations of bids must state suit lengths and point counts. (Full disclosure is the rule.) It is not sufficient to say, "We play Precision" or "It's a negative double". If necessary, ask opponents to explain further.
- If a bid has not been discussed in the partnership, say "Undiscussed". You are not required to guess what your partner means, and you may be giving false information if you do so.
- If you make a wrong bid but your partner explains your bid according to your agreement about that bid, there is no need to notify the Director as there has been no actual infraction of the rules. (If in doubt, excuse yourself from table without fuss and speak to Director.)

### **Wrong Explanation of a Bid**

- If your partner has explained your bid incorrectly, don't call Director. You are not allowed to take notice of his/her mistaken explanation to change your bidding. You must continue to bid according to your system/agreements.
- If your partner realizes his/her explanation was mistaken during the auction, s/he must immediately call Director and correct the explanation.
- If your side becomes Declarer, call Director and tell the opponents about the mistaken explanation before they lead.
- If your side becomes Defenders, notify the Director at end of the hand.

### **Doubles**

- Your opening bid cannot be a double. (You must double an opposition's bid – even if just showing points.)
- You cannot double your partner.
- You have to alert only doubles with unexpected meaning (e.g. *support double* shows 3-card support for partner).

### **PSYCHING**

This is where a player bids grossly misrepresents their hand regardless of their bidding agreements.

- Not illegal, but not a good idea for beginners (as you are lying to your partner as well as the opposition).
- Not alertable – as partner doesn't know you are lying about your hand.
- Illegal if there is a way for partner to know you psyched but the opponents cannot know. "Controlled psyches" are illegal.
- Frequent psyching is disruptive and can result in penalties or being barred from the game, event, tournament, or club.

## BOARDS

- All players at the table are responsible for making sure boards are played in the right order and orientation.
- Boards must always be kept in N-S orientation, no matter where they are. (This prevents hands being put in the wrong pockets. At tournaments, boards are sometimes kept in the middle of the table for this reason.)
- Vulnerability (as written on board) must remain visible throughout the game. Don't cover it with your bidding pad or bridge pad.
- West/North passes the boards back to the previous table. If play has been held up, then one of the pair waiting can pass the completed board back. (No person waiting to play the board is allowed to get it, in case they see the cards or a contract being written down.)

## CARDS AND PLAY

- Always count your cards before you look at them.
- Always make your opening lead face down (in case the wrong person leads).
- Any card that touches the table is considered a played card. It must be played unless the Director rules.
- Opponents can accept a lead from the wrong, but you must call the Director. You cannot just pick it up again. (The lead is considered accepted as soon as the opposition plays a card.)
- Declarer should call for a card to be played from Dummy's hand and not touch Dummy's cards.  
There are 2 reasons for this:
  1. A mistaken call or designation can be changed (if you call the Director immediately), but a touched card is a played card.
  2. When you lean forward to play from Dummy, you lose sight of your hand. You can lose track of what you intended to play.
- Dummy may not play any card – including singletons – without being directed to by Declarer. In fact, apart from preventing Declarer from committing an infraction, (e.g. asking "Having none" if Declarer fails to follow suit), Dummy isn't allowed to say or do anything during play.
- Declarer should not play a card from Dummy until their left-hand opponent has played. Call the Director if Declarer makes a habit of this.
- Think ahead: as soon as you have played a card, you should be thinking about your next move or possible moves. However...
  - Players should not detach a card from their hand before it is their turn to lead or play.
  - Don't turn your card over until all players have played to the trick.
  - The player who wins the trick should be first to turn their card over.
  - You can ask to inspect the last trick played only if you haven't turned your card over. No other quitted tricks can be inspected.
- Don't collect up your cards until all players at the table have agreed to the number of tricks made.
- At the end of the hand, shuffle your cards briefly before putting them back in the correct pocket.
- If there is any irregularity, one player (NOT DUMMY) should call the Director and explain what happened. Too many voices just confuse the Director and it takes longer to sort out.
- No player is allowed to touch another player's cards.
- We expect slow players to speed up their game if they are still playing after the round has been called. There are no dispensations if you are held up by slow play. We expect slow players (and their opposition) to catch up in the next round.
- One person from the partnership should keep an eye on the clock. If you know you aren't going to have enough time to play a board, call the Director. You might play it later.
- If you are running late, West moves on, leaving South and East to deal with the scoring. North picks up the new boards and, as soon as the next West sits down, they both count their cards. This means that when South and the new East pick up their hands, one person from each partnership has already sorted their (own) hand and worked out their bid. It keeps play moving.

- If you have bid but not started playing when the end of the round is called, the Director may not allow you to play the board at that moment. You might have to take a late play.

### **CALLING THE DIRECTOR**

The Director must be called if there is any irregularity at the table.

- Do not make your own rulings at the table. If anyone accidentally makes a wrong bid or plays a wrong card, they need to call the Director. If you make your own rulings, you may be denying the opposition, or even yourselves, rights they (or you) are entitled to.
- It's a good way to learn the rules (laws) so don't consider it telling tales or bad sportsmanship. It is part of the game and you are actually breaking the rules if you don't.
- The Director's ruling is final. Who calls the Director?
- As a matter of etiquette, it is the person who committed the infraction who calls the Director (NEVER DUMMY). If they don't, politely suggest that they need to do so, and if they still don't, politely call the Director yourself.
- For prompt attention, make sure you call loudly, "**Director, please**", and keep your hand up until you catch the Director's eye.
- Play stops immediately when the Director is called.
- Just one person, usually the one calling the Director, explains the situation. If a Director arrives at a table and 4 different voices are trying to tell him/her what happened, it's too confusing. If one person gives the facts in a logical order, then the Director can make a decision quickly and easily. Rectification not penalties
- Directors' rulings are based on 'restoring equity', i.e. keeping contracts and play of the hands on a par with the rest of the room, rather than penalizing people for wrongdoing.

### **DIRECTORS**

Directors help make the play and movement of boards and players run smoothly. They help players, and are available to answer questions about the rules and things that affect players' enjoyment and understanding of the game.

- Directors do not make the rules.
- Directors usually train for a long time before they sit a 3-hour exam, in which they are required to achieve at least an 80% pass mark.
- As well as knowing the rules, Bridge protocol and having a delightful personality, Directors also have to make sure each section has the right number of boards in play, that additional feed-in/ relay boards are in the right places. Late arrivals delay this process.
- The Director's ruling is final. (However, in tournaments you may appeal the ruling if you are very sure of your case. There is a penalty for an "appeal without merit".)

### **CLAIM**

A claim is a statement that your side will win a certain number of tricks (without actually playing them out).

- A claim should be accompanied by a clear statement of your 'line of play', i.e. the order in which remaining cards will be played. (You can't just say, "The rest are mine" even if it is obvious.)
- Play ceases immediately the claim is made. You cannot "play them out" unless the Director is present.
- If there is any doubt or the line of play is not stated, call Director.
- Any doubt about a claim is resolved in favor of the opposition. Some recommendations
- Wait until all trumps have been played before claiming.
- Don't claim until you have only 3 or 4 cards remaining in your hand.
- Lay your cards on the table 1-by-1 in the order that you intend to play them, stating what you are going to do.

### **CONCESSION**

A concession is a statement that your side will lose a certain number of the tricks remaining to be played.

- If a Defender concedes and his partner objects, there is no concession, but Director must be called.
- Don't concede unless you are sure.

## CONVENTIONS

A convention is an artificial bid that has an understood meaning.

- Common examples are:
  - o **Stayman** (2♣ in response to a 1NT opening bid – promising a 4-card major and asking opener if they have a 4-card major)
  - o **Blackwood** (4NT ace-asking) and **Gerber** (4♣ ace-asking). Ace-asking is asking partner how many aces they have if you are looking for slam. There are also other conventions for this.
- Most conventions need to be alerted, but very common ones (which are universally understood) don't. For example, the following DON'T need to be alerted:
  - o Stayman (but transfers must be alerted. Note a natural 2♣ bid in response to a 1NT opening bid must be alerted)
  - o 2♣ opener promising 23+ points and 2♦ reply (negative or waiting).
  - o Weak 2♥ and 2♠. (Alert Strong 2 bids)
  - o Pre-empts (7 of a suit, 6-10 points)
  - o Most Doubles (opponents should ask). *Support Doubles* require an alert.
- Conventional bids at the 4 level or above from your 2<sup>nd</sup> call on are *delayed alerts* – alerts these after the bidding is over.
- The above are just a few conventions players can use. It is a good idea to start introducing them 1 at a time when you have mastered the basics. If you do decide to use 1 or more conventions, both players in the partnership must use them and be able to explain them if asked during the game.

## DUMMY

- Dummy puts his/her hand on the table one card at a time in neat columns (top card in line with opposition's shoulders) with trumps on Declarer's left in a suit contract.
- Dummy should not comment on the quality of his/her hand.
- Dummy is NOT allowed to speak during the game. However, s/he is allowed to prevent Declarer making a mistake, e.g. to say "Table" or "Hand" if declarer unsure; and to say "Having none" if declarer doesn't follow suit and you want to make sure s/he isn't revoking. Note: Dummy may prevent play from the wrong hand, but not correct it; i.e. If Declarer has already touched a card or played from the wrong hand, it is too late for Dummy to correct him/her. The card is then considered played and cannot be changed or picked up. (Director must be called as Defenders have the right to accept it or not.)
- Dummy is NOT allowed to play a card – even if it is a singleton or obvious – unless directed by Declarer.
- Declarer should not play a card from hand and then a card from Dummy in the same action. The opposition must be allowed time to play their card in order. Otherwise, Director must be called as opposition has options.
- Dummy is not allowed to call the Director if they see an irregularity until the end of the hand.

## HAND RECORDS

These are the handouts available at the end of the session showing the hands dealt for each board.

- They also give (in a box below the hands) the contracts to be made on that board for each side, i.e. the number of tricks that could be made depending on who is Declarer.
- They are made available to help partnerships improve the accuracy of their bidding.
- Hand Records are illegal to see prior to the end of the session. Severe penalties will apply.

## PERSONAL RECORD SHEETS

These are for individual players to keep a record of the final contract, lead, etc, of each board so you can discuss later with your partner when looking at the hand records. These are on the inside of your ACBL Convention Card.

- Convention Cards are usually found in a stack near the Director's desk.
- Make sure writing them down does not delay your play and hold other people up.

- Only one person in the partnership needs to write them down, but it's good if both do. A Director might need your record to correct a scoring irregularity.

### **LEADING**

- Always make the opening lead face down – in case you have made a mistake. It also gives your partner an opportunity to ask about the bidding if they need to. (Any question(s) at the end of bidding must be made after the opening lead so that it doesn't influence partner's choice of lead (unauthorized info). Similarly, opening lead must be face down so that questioner isn't influenced by seeing the lead. Generally questions do not arise at junior level as bidding is much more straightforward than at senior levels.)
- A card on the table is considered played. Once a card has been placed at or near the table, even if it has been led out of turn, it cannot be picked up again unless the Director says so.

### **PENALTY CARDS**

These are cards prematurely exposed by a Defender. When any card is prematurely exposed through dropping or playing out of turn, always call the Director. Don't make your own rulings.

- A card played face-up on the table is 'tabled' or 'faced' and is considered to be in play. It cannot be picked up without calling the Director.
- Declarer does not have penalty cards. If s/he accidentally exposes a card or plays a wrong card, it can be returned to hand. There are 2 kinds of penalty cards:

#### **1. Major Penalty Card**

- Any exposed honor, or any card 'tabled' incorrectly.
- Must be played at the first legal opportunity.
- Declarer has 'lead rights', i.e. Declarer can require or prohibit the lead of that suit (or let opponent lead whatever they want). If Declarer requires or prohibits the suit, the penalty card is picked up and doesn't have to be played. (Knowledge of this card is authorized to the Declarer only; i.e. partner must pretend s/he hasn't seen it and play as if s/he doesn't know where it is.)
- When a Defender has 2 or more penalty cards, Declarer can choose which one is to be played.

#### **2. Minor Penalty Card**

- A card below honor in rank (i.e. 9 or below) accidentally dropped or played with another card.
- Just has to be played at the first legal opportunity.
- Declarer has no lead rights.

### **YOUR SYSTEM (and BIDDING AGREEMENTS)**

All the agreements you and your partner have about bidding (e.g. what conventions you play), leading, discards and defense must be made known to all your opponents.

- To play well, you need a system.
- Both players in a partnership must play the same system (i.e. have the same agreements).
- If you are in a regular partnership and don't have any set agreements, you need to take the time to discuss them because both partners need to know what each other expects – and the opposition has a right to know also!
- There are ACB Convention Cards available at the club to help you sort out your bidding system.
- If your partner bids something you haven't discussed, and the opposition ask what it means, DON'T tell them what you think it means, say "Undiscussed" (and sort it out before you next play).
- Apart from brief comments, discussions between partners about their system should take place away from the table.

### **ACBL Convention Cards**

- There are Convention Cards available at the venue to help you define your agreements. You and your partner both must have identical cards. The cards must conform to ACBL requirements.
- Aside from Beginners just out of classes, players are not allowed to look at their notes, their Convention Card or the score sheet during bidding and play. (No extraneous sources of info are allowed.) However, you are allowed to look at your Convention Card or notes between hands.

- The opposition is entitled to know your system and is allowed to look at your Convention Card before play and during bidding and play – but only at their turn to bid or play.
- If you need help to fill out your Convention Card, ask a Director.

### **PRE-ALERTING**

- Unusual conventions should be pre-alerted, i.e. mentioned to the opposition before the start of bidding, so that the opponents can ask and understand them before the game starts. See the ACBL Convention Charts: <http://web2.acbl.org/documentlibrary/play/Convention-Chart.pdf>

### **UNAUTHORISED (Extraneous) INFORMATION**

Information about the cards is 'unauthorized' and subject to penalty if it is from a source other than the bidding and play. Sources of unauthorized information are:

- Table talk – even innocent comments like “I don't know which ace to lead” give a player information about his/her partner's hand which they shouldn't have.
- Body language – e.g. sighs over your hand or the cards partner leads or plays, looking at partner to make sure they notice a bid or play, shrugging to imply that you have nothing much worth playing.
- A change in bidding style, e.g. an unnaturally long hesitation before bidding – implies you have something in your hand worth thinking about.
- Writing a bid or playing a card with undue emphasis. Try to bid and play at an even tempo and write all bids the same size. Do not use a full stop after a bid.
- Overhearing talk about the hands at a nearby table. Avoid discussing hands or contracts loudly during the game.
- Not necessarily seeing, but being in a position to see any of partner's cards – e.g. when partner plays a card out of turn or drops a card or cards. This is why a player cannot just return an exposed card to their hand even if their partner hasn't seen it.
- Being in a position to see the play or score of a board that you haven't played – this is why a player who is waiting for boards cannot get up and get a board from the previous table. They might see cards being played or scores being entered. Boards must be handed on by people who have just played the board or by people who are waiting to sit down at the previous table.
- Penalty cards – you are not allowed to use the knowledge of your partner's penalty card on the table to affect your play.
- Using partner's explanation of a bid to affect your play.

### **COMMON MISTAKES**

- If you make any mistake in procedure or law, call the Director.
- Don't try to sort it out yourself – nor allow the opposition to tell you what to do. That is the Director's job.
- Here are 5 common mistakes (infractions of the law) :
  - a) Bid out of turn
  - b) Insufficient bid
  - c) Opening lead out of turn
  - d) Lead out of turn
  - e) Revoke

### **BID OUT OF TURN**

There are a number of laws regarding bids or passes out of turn. Always call the Director.

- When a player bids at another player's turn, the opposition has the right to accept it if they think it would be to their advantage. (Play continues as normal and there are no penalties.)
- If not accepted, the bid reverts back to the correct player and the Director is called.

Penalties depend on 3 things:

1. Whether or not you have bid or passed
2. Whether it is the first bid of the hand or there have been previous bids

### 3. Whose turn you have actually stolen!

There is a bit more to it than this, but in a nutshell:

- After the correct player has bid, a perpetrator who has passed out of turn usually has to pass for one round.
- For a perpetrator who has bid out of turn, his partner gets the punishment and is usually not allowed to bid.

### INSUFFICIENT BID

This is a bid that is lower than the one just made by the opposition. Don't try to correct it and don't let the opposition tell you to "Make it good". Call the Director and let him/her explain the options available to both sides, according to the rules.

1. The next opponent in rotation can accept an insufficient bid.
2. If the insufficient bid is not accepted there are two ways it can be corrected without penalty.
  - The lowest sufficient bid in the same denomination – provided neither the insufficient bid nor its correction is artificial. E.g. 3♦ – 3♣ can be changed to 4♣ provided 4♣ is not artificial (i.e. not ace-asking)
  - A legal call that has the same or more precise meaning than the insufficient bid. E.g. If 3♣ above was showing ♣ control and looking for game, a 3NT bid would be acceptable and not bar partner from bidding.
3. An accidental insufficient response to ace-asking or a transfer can be replaced with a response at the correct level without penalty (i.e. without barring partner from auction) if it is not accepted.
4. If the insufficient bid is replaced by a bid that is a different suit or by a pass, partner must pass for the rest of the auction. Lead restrictions may apply to your partner if your side defends. The director's ruling aims for a 'normal' bridge result, i.e. one that is equitable with the rest of the room. Players who think they have been disadvantaged by the correction of an insufficient bid (in that their opponents reached a more favorable contract than they would have done without the infraction) can call the Director at end of play and apply for an adjustment. An adjustment is not available if the insufficient bid was accepted.

### OPENING LEAD OUT OF TURN

When a defender makes an opening lead out of turn, the declarer has so many choices to make (5 altogether) that it can often be very confusing. Here is an explanation of the choices and some tips for making the most advantageous decision in each case.

1. Declarer can accept the lead and become Dummy. His/her hand goes down on the table and partner plays. OR
2. Declarer can accept the lead and remain Declarer. Dummy goes down on the table and Declarer can look at it before playing a card from his/her hand. *Tip: The decision about whether to accept the opening lead is based on 2 things: (1) Can I win that trick or at least regain control in the second round? And (2) Do I want the weak or the strong hand on the table? Usually you want the strong hand OFF the table so any weaknesses in it remain hidden from the opposition. If the opening lead is in your weak suit (i.e. you have only losers in it), you would choose not to accept it. In this case, the lead must come from the correct hand and you have 3 further choices.*
3. You can require the lead to be in the same suit as the incorrect lead. In this case, the incorrect lead is picked up and does not have to be played as long as Defender follows suit. *Tip: This would be a strategic decision if you have a broken suit in your hand that you want the opposition to lead into. Not recommended unless you know what you are doing.*
4. You can forbid a lead in the same suit as the incorrect lead. (Once again, the incorrect lead is picked up.) Defender cannot lead from the forbidden suit as long as s/he retains the lead. *Tip: This is your best bet if you've got losers in this suit that you hope you will be able to throw away (pitch) on one of your strong suits.*
5. You can allow the lead from the correct hand to be in any suit. Defender in this case must not be influenced by the card his partner has shown as it is considered to be 'unauthorized information' for Defenders. The Defender on lead must make a lead based solely on the merits of his/her hand and info from bidding. The incorrect lead remains on the table as a penalty card and must be played at the first legal opportunity. Not only this, but as long as this penalty card remains on the table, Declarer has the lead-determining rights mentioned in 3, 4 and 5 whenever the offender's partner is on lead. *Tip: You need to be sure you can keep or get back control (i.e. have winners in all the other suits) to allow this option.*

Some other things to keep in mind:

- Declarer alone makes these choices. Dummy isn't allowed a say.
- Declarer can't ask Defender to lead a specific suit unless it is option 3.
- Option 4: Once the opening lead has been lost and regained, this Defender can lead the forbidden suit.
- These choices were not invented by the Directors to make your life difficult. They come from the rule book.

The best thing to do is take it one step at a time: Will I accept the lead? Do I want to be Dummy or play the hand? Do I want the lead of that suit?

### **How to avoid this situation altogether**

As defenders can see, they may be seriously penalized by making a hasty opening lead and giving Declarer all these extra rights. There is a rule that prevents this from happening: Check that it's your lead. Then always put your opening lead face down on the table.

### **LEAD OUT OF TURN**

There is a lot involved in this law, so if someone leads out of turn, you must call the Director. Don't let them pick it up or leave it on the table as a penalty card.

- The lead is considered to have been accepted if a card is played by the next player.
- Any lead out of turn may be accepted – unless the player has been misinformed by the opposition (into leading when it is not their turn), in which case another law applies.
- If Declarer leads from the wrong hand, either Defender may accept it (by saying, "I accept the lead") or refuse it. If Defenders disagree, the player next in turn has the deciding say.
- If the card is not accepted, Declarer replaces this card without penalty and leads from the correct hand.
- For a Defender, an unaccepted lead out of turn becomes a penalty card. (Knowledge of this card is unauthorized for his partner. Even though Partner can see the card lying on the table, he must act as though he does not know it is in his partner's hand. This means he cannot take advantage of this knowledge in any way via his play.)

### **REVOKE**

A revoke is failure to follow suit when holding a card in that suit. Unless players stay calm and go about this systematically, sorting out a revoke can take up valuable playing time.

- Always call the Director. Sometimes you can correct it immediately and sometimes you will be asked to play on and sort it out at the end of the game.
- It is important to keep your cards in order.
- No player may touch another's cards.
- Don't pick up or disturb your cards until the revoke issue has been sorted out.
- Use 'revoke' not 'renege'. If you have revoked
- If you spot your revoke before you or your partner have played a card to the next trick, you must correct it – but call the Director first.
- If it is too late to correct the revoke, keep quiet. It is up to the opposition to spot it. (If they do, there are no added penalties for not fessing up straight away.)
- Once identified – and it is too late to correct it – note the trick and continue. Call Director at the end of the game as that is when penalties (if any) are assigned. If you think another player has revoked
- Move your turned-over card on that trick down a bit. At the end of the game you can then go back to that trick and check what was played.
- If there is any disagreement, call the Director immediately. Otherwise, sort out exactly where the revoke occurred and then call the Director.
- If you are not sure where the revoke occurred, then start where you think it did, with each player turning over their own card to the same trick – one card at a time – so you can track who led what and who played what.

If another player thinks you have revoked and you disagree, don't get upset. Call the Director.

### **Penalties (i.e. rectification)**

Penalties are assigned according to which hand the revoke occurred in and whether any subsequent tricks were won by offending side. The penalties for revoking vary from awarding zero to 2 tricks to the opposition. This is to compensate them for what they would have won if the revoke had not occurred. It is not about punishing the guilty party, but about giving the opposition what they were due.

In the rare case where the opposition would have won more than 2 tricks had the revoke not occurred, the Director will award extra tricks.

### **No Penalties**

Many people think that a revoke should be a hanging offence, but actually there are no penalties in the following situations:

- If offending side didn't win revoke trick or any subsequent trick
- For a second revoke in the same suit
- If the revoke was from a penalty card or Dummy
- If revoke noticed after the hand has been played
- If revoke occurred on the 12th trick.
- When both sides have revoked on the same board.

Director must still be called in case offender's card has given his partner unauthorized info that affects his play

Avoiding a Revoke – always the best plan! When your partner fails to follow suit, ask: "Having none, partner?" Or if the opposition fails to follow suit, Declarer can ask a Defender if they are out and vice versa, but Dummy can only ask Declarer.

### **Scoring Devices**

There are a number of scoring devices used in club games and tournaments. They look like calculators or cell phones and are fairly simple to use. Ask another player to show you how to use them. Electronic scoring is a boon to saving time and increasing accuracy reporting games at all levels. Failure to check your scores and approve them during play can result in wrong results. Be sure to attend to scoring for your side.