

Buderim Contract Bridge Club (BCBC)

A simple guide to the rules and etiquette in the game of contract bridge

Rules and regulations

We all play bridge for enjoyment and for the social opportunities it provides. Like all quality games, duplicate bridge is governed by a comprehensive set of playing rules adopted by the Australian Bridge Federation (ABF). While we are not formally affiliated with ABF, the BCBC applies the ABF Laws of Duplicate Bridge at all its regular competitions.

The purpose of the Laws of Bridge is to define the correct procedure for the auction bidding and subsequent card play and to provide a remedy when something goes wrong. The law book is not an easy read, so we have prepared a summary of the most important issues. Hopefully, this synopsis of procedures will help all players to a better understanding of the laws of bridge and make life easier for our Directors supervising our bridge sessions.

We believe, if you follow these simple guidelines you will improve your own bridge play and gain greater satisfaction and pleasure from your bridge sessions at the club or in social play elsewhere. After all, that is what it is all about!!

Bidding Systems

When you learnt to play duplicate bridge, you were introduced to a basic communication system whereby you speak to your partner in code during the bidding phase to reach what your partnership believes to be the best contract level you can achieve for a particular hand of cards. At BCBC, most members will be familiar with the Standard American (5 card majors) bidding system but some players have learnt, and prefer to use, different bidding systems. ACOL and Precision are two other bidding systems that are used by some players at our club. Some other members, while using the Standard American bidding system, use some specific variations to the Standard American conventions.

It is an essential principle of the game of bridge that players don't have secret agreements with their partners either in bidding or in card play. All such partnership understandings should be fully disclosed to your opponents. This principle of full disclosure requires that you have a duty to draw your opponents' attention to any bid that has a special meaning, or, a meaning the opponents may not expect. There are some approved alerting procedures explained in the ABF Systems regulations.

Announcements

In bidding systems, an opening bid of “1Club” may have a variety of meanings . The regulations require that when your partner bids 1C you must immediately announce your understanding of your partner’s opening bid – for example, you might announce the minimum club length held by your partner as “Two plus” meaning that you understand that your partner may have as few as two cards in the club suit. Similarly, whenever your partner opens with a “1NT” bid you must immediately announce the point range ; for example , 15-17, or 16- 18, or 15 -18.

Alerting

*In duplicate bridge, we use a term “ **Convention**”. This means a bid that, by agreement with your partner, conveys a meaning other than the willingness to play in the denomination bid. For example bidding a “transfer” after an opening bid of “1NT”.*

By alerting, you notify your opponents that your partner’s bid has a special meaning. You should say the word “alert” and draw a circle around your partner’s bid. Do not offer an explanation unless your left-hand opponent (LHO) requests an explanation.

Some bids are deemed to be self-alerting . That means you do not have to alert such bids. Some examples are –

- *Partner’s “2C” response after you opened with a “1NT” . In an uncontested auction this bid is taken to be the Stayman convention).*
- *Bids above “3NT” except for artificial opening bids*
- *Doubles (“x”) or Redoubles (xx) whether for “take-out” or “penalty”*

You should “alert”

- *All artificial bids except “self-alerting” bids*
- *Any “natural bid” that has a meaning that may surprise your opponents – for example, a “1NT” overcall that does not promise a “stopper” in the opponents’ bid suit.*

At the end of the auction and before the opening lead is exposed, the declaring side should draw to attention any unusual features of their bidding during the auction, particularly unusual “self alerting” bids (for example, Gerber CRO or Roman keycard Blackwood). You do this by putting a small “+” next to the bid(s) to be explained. If a lot of “+s” are needed, it will be easier to say something like “would you like an explanation of our auction bidding?”. You do not have to give an explanation unless your opponents indicate they would like one.

How to be a “good” Dummy

- *When displaying your hand as Dummy, make sure all 13 cards are clearly visible to the Declarer. The cards should be displayed in suits in descending order of value. If a particular suit has been nominated as Trumps that suit should be placed in the right-hand column.*
- *The Declarer will find play easier if Dummy is attentive to the Declarer’s instructions on the card requested to be played*
- *You may seek to prevent your partner from leading from the wrong hand but, if you are too late to prevent that, you must remain silent*

- *If Declarer does not follow in the suit led, you may check to ensure that the Declarer has not revoked. You do this by saying “having none, partner?”*
- *You may tell any player at your table if they have pointed their card in the wrong direction (ie showing a trick won or lost), but only on the most recent trick played.*

How to avoid being a “bad” Dummy

- *Do not play a card from the Dummy until told to do so by the Declarer.*
- *Do not suggest a card to be played by moving a hand towards it.*
- *Do not ask the defending team if they have revoked.*
- *Do not draw attention to an irregularity such as a Revoke until the hand has been completed.*
- *Do not call the Director unless another player at the table has already pointed out an irregularity.*
- *Do not look at any other player’s hand while play is in progress.*

Claiming the remaining Tricks

- *If you are confident that you will win the remaining tricks in a hand (either as Declarer or as a Defender), it is the proper etiquette to “make a claim”. This involves making a clear statement about how you intend to play the remaining tricks (for example, in what order you intend to play the remaining cards).*
- *If you feel an opponent’s claim is invalid, you have two options*
 - *Call the Director (recommended action), or,*
 - *If all four players agree, you can play out the hand.*
- *If you are defending, and your partner tries to concede one or more tricks and you don’t agree – you guessed it – Call the director!*

Some other Do’s and Don’ts

- *Above all, have fun! That’s why we play bridge.*
- *Make visitors/new members feel welcome.*
- *Count your cards in each hand before you look at them.*
- *As a Defender, make your Opening Lead face down and wait for your partner’s confirmation that the lead is from the correct table position. Your partner might also wish to query some aspect of the auction bidding.*
- *Call the Director if you have any concern about something that happens at your table . You do this by raising your hand and calling “Director please” in a polite tone.*
- **Don’t** *let your opponents talk you out of calling the Director.*
- **Don’t** *discuss a hand with loud voices (other tables have still to play that hand !)*
- **Don’t** *rotate a board, or move it from the centre of the table, while a hand is in progress.*
- **Don’t** *return cards to the board at the end of a hand to the wrong slot*