

# **CONDENSED RULES AND GUIDANCE**

## **Part 1 – Etiquette and Bidding**

**(Compiled from ABF, BAWA and WABC documentation)**

The world's most challenging mental sport, bridge is a game of skill, communication and infinite possibilities. It's part science, part math, part logic, part reason and embodies cooperation, problem solving and has even been linked to higher test scores among children. It is an easy game to learn, a hard game to master, but you don't have to be an expert to enjoy it.

Much of the popularity of contract bridge is attributed to the high standard of etiquette which is observed by players. No other modern game leans so heavily on the expectation that participants conduct themselves in a highly civilised, consistent and methodical manner. Bridge is an extremely ethical game. All good players strive to ensure that their bridge ethics are impeccable and no more serious charge, other than outright cheating, can be made than to accuse a player of bad ethics. Unlike poker in which all sorts of mannerisms, misleading statements and bluff tactics are part and parcel of the game, bridge should be played with a 'pokerface'!

Beginners are, of course, excused for their lapses and in social games nobody minds very much, but in serious competition your bridge demeanour must be beyond reproach. Experienced players should go out of their way to make novice players feel at ease, so that they see bridge as a pleasant recreation, not a battleground. Rockingham Bridge Club welcomes all players to its tables and fosters a friendly and courteous environment.

These two documents (Parts 1 and 2) outline generally what is expected of an experienced player at the Bridge table, and conform to IBF Zone 7, ABF and BAWA Laws, Regulations, Rulings and Interpretations.

### **Courtesy**

#### **The Golden Rule — “Always be courteous at the bridge table.”**

(This applies to how one relates to partner, the opponents and the Director.)

- Please be seated 10 minutes prior to the commencement of a normal club session and 15 minutes prior to any Red Point event.
- It is always good practice to greet your new opponents at the table.
- Carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause embarrassment or discomfort to any other player – or which might interfere with his/her enjoyment of the game. This particularly applies to your treatment of new players. Everybody has a right to feel “comfortable” at the bridge table. Thus your behaviour should be exemplary at all times.
- You should be aware at all times that Directors are usually volunteers and give of their time for your enjoyment of the game. They are the sole arbiters during a session and you are expected to accept their rulings with good grace and accede to their requests when they are reasonable. They are vital to the conduct of the game and are not there to be argued with, or criticised.
- Remember also that there is no stigma attached to the Director being called; it is merely an obligation to ensure that correct procedure is followed and equity exists. The calling of the Director should not be seen as a comment on ability or character, but simply as a way of ensuring a level playing field.
- As a player, if you feel that something has happened at your table and you are not sure what to do, please call the Director who will look at what has happened and make a decision.
- With the exception of Dummy, players are expected to call the Director when problems, such as law infractions, hesitations or rude behaviour, occur. Dummy may only call the Director after the hand has been played if s/he has observed some infraction during play.
- Failure to call the Director has the potential to affect the scores and enjoyment of every other player in the session. Do not try to ‘fix’ things yourself.
- Please call the Director to the table in a courteous manner. Using the word ‘please’ assists in this courtesy. You should simply put up your hand and calmly say “Director please” just loud enough to be heard.
- Although the Director is your friend, that does not mean that he or she will always rule in your favour. All Directors try to be knowledgeable and impartial in applying bridge laws that are not generally known, nor easily understood.

- You may politely request a reconsideration of a Director's ruling, but once it is confirmed then **you are required to accept it**. You may appeal this decision in writing, but should not be commenting to others about it, either during that session or at any time later. The Appeal forms are on the wall. Frivolous appeals are discouraged.
- If a data entry correction needs to be made, the Director of the session should be approached. The time period for data entry corrections are as follows:-  
Green Point - 24 hours from the end of the session.  
Red Point – Until the results are announced.
- It is in your best interest as a bridge player to learn the basic bridge laws/rules covering such things as Dummy's rights, as well as those concerning your responsibilities as a participant at the table.
- It is not proper to effusively commend partner for an extraordinarily good play or defence in front of the opponents. On the other hand, it is also poor behaviour to berate partner when he or she plays less than perfectly. Likewise, it is not proper to chastise the opponents when a poor play turns out to be lucky, or a good play provides you with a bad board.
- At the end of a round it is courteous to thank your opponents before moving on to the next table.

### Mobile Phones

- Please turn off your mobile phone prior to the commencement of a bridge session.
- If it is absolutely vital that you have it on, leave it on vibrate.

### Conversation at the Table

- Once the bidding has commenced, general conversation is not encouraged at the table. Bridge is a competitive game and each player needs to respect the rights of all other players. Before the first board begins it is certainly permissible to exchange pleasantries with partner and the opponents.
- Wait until the round is over for post-mortems - *if you must have them* - and speak softly, so your conversation is NOT AUDIBLE to players at other tables.
- Not only is it poor form to discuss hands in front of opponents, it is usually not in the best interest of your partnership effort. A post-mortem could undermine partnership confidence and may communicate information to players at other tables who have not played the hand. This could certainly be to your detriment and may create an ethical dilemma for other players. (Law 73C)
- It is also unwise to try to teach, or criticise, a player (including your partner) at the table unless guidance is requested. Prefer to say too little rather than too much. If partner has bid or played the hand poorly, say 'bad luck' and leave it at that.

### Table Manners and Bidding

- At the start of a round it is courteous to explain the main features of your system (e.g we play Acol with four-card majors) and any unusual features of your bidding system. At the completion of the auction, Declarer should offer to give a full explanation of the auction if it contained Alerted calls or calls which may be misunderstood by opponents.
- Cards should not be taken out of the board until at least three players are at the table.
- Before you look at your cards, count your hand and ensure that you have exactly thirteen cards.
- Start bidding as soon as possible if you are the Dealer. Nobody can do anything until you do.
- When using the bidding box, decide what your bid is going to be before reaching for or touching cards in the bidding box. An extreme example of this impropriety is when you say, touch a 2♥ card, and then pull out a 'Pass' card.
- Any opening bid of 1 club or 1 No Trump must be explained by the Opener's partner. For example; For a 1 No Trump opening, the explanation might be – "It contains 12 to 14 points and no singletons or voids."
- Do not make any comments during bidding. Avoid mannerisms, meaningful eye contact, sighs, grimaces or using any words such as — "I guess I need to pass". Bidding boxes were introduced in the game to reduce the possibility of information being communicated between partners by voice, intonation, or mannerisms.
- Do not ask for information unless it is your turn to call or play.
- Do not ask for information unless you are intending to bid. It is unethical to question an opponent on any facet of the auction if you have NO INTENTION of bidding. Asking for an explanation without bidding could, in certain circumstances, be construed as passing unauthorised information to your partner. If you don't intend to bid, questions of the opponents should be left until after the

auction has concluded. If you are on lead, you may ask your questions before leading. If your partner is on lead, you should not ask questions until after the lead card has been tabled.

- If you've made an insufficient bid, keep quiet. The worst thing you can do is to try to explain yourself ... for example, "I didn't see you open" or "I thought you bid 1D". In the great majority of cases, the laws provide some way for insufficient bids to be fixed without having any effect on the auction. However, once you suggest to everyone (in particular partner) what you were thinking, you may find that you have passed unauthorised information.
- You have an obligation to know your system and offer the correct explanation should your opponents enquire. If you know you have an agreement, but have forgotten what the meaning is, then call the Director. The Director will probably ask you to leave the table and your partner will be required to explain the meaning of the bid to your opponents.
- When explaining your partner's bid, it is very important that you avoid such expressions as, "I am taking it as..." or, "I think it is..." This again gives your partner "unauthorised" information. So you can only: - 1) Explain the agreement; - 2) Say that you do not know as it has not been discussed; - or 3) Summon the Director if you have forgotten your system bid.
- If you are Declarer or Dummy be sure to correct any wrong information before the opening lead has been made.
- If you are defending and partner has given a wrong explanation, DO NOT draw attention to it until after the play is finished. If the opponents wish, the Director can then be called to determine if 'damage' has been caused. To sum up - When partner has given a wrong explanation, if you are Declarer or Dummy then correct at the end of the auction, **or** if you are a defender, correct at the end of the play
- When you are making the opening lead, play your card face down as soon as possible and wait for your partner's agreement before turning it face up. To save time, do this before writing down your contract or entering details in Bridgmate. This gets play moving and prevents irregularities....such as leading when it is not your turn to do so. It also allows questions about the auction or any Alerts to be answered.
- Don't put the bidding cards away until all explanations have been completed. The opening lead will then be faced (turned up) and all players should then return their bidding cards to their boxes. This ensures that the defenders are able to review the auction and to ask any questions prior to play commencing.
- Put Dummy down as soon as possible and practise putting the cards down quickly with the trump suit on your right.
- The board should be left on the table during the bidding and play of the hand, so that everyone can see the vulnerability.
- At least one member of any pair should keep a personal score sheet for that session.
- Players using personal score sheets should ensure that they remain closed from view, except when recording scores.

### Tempo / Hesitations

- Acquire the habit of bidding and playing 'smoothly' and in tempo.
- Avoid hesitations by being consistent and deliberate. If you have a difficult decision you have a right to think, but partner cannot take advantage of the knowledge that you had a problem. So if your partner takes time to bid or bids out of tempo, and then passes, you should pass too unless that action would be totally illogical considering your hand. You should have a "clear" bid that is in NO way influenced by your partner's hesitation. Any bid after the hesitation by partner, may have to be justified to the Director.
- Do not be upset if an opponent calls the Director to monitor the auction in this situation, as it is the proper thing to do to ensure a level playing field.  
NB Please give new players plenty of latitude in this before calling the Director, as they may be new to their system.
- Keep your mannerisms, intonations and play consistent at all times. Neither partner, nor the opponents, are entitled to information gained from deviations in your behaviour or voice fluctuations. It takes a great deal of effort to master a uniform tempo of play, behaviour and voice level, but without them, the opponents obtain much more information that you need to give them. In play for example, you should avoid 'snapping' the card or playing with undue emphasis, as it may reveal special interest to either partner or an opponent.

## Club Recorders

The Club Recorders are available for club members who feel that a breach of ethics or propriety has occurred. Bridge is an ethical and courteous game. While everyone wants to win, we also play bridge for fun, particularly at club level. Therefore, anyone playing at the club should be able to do so without being intimidated, bullied or taken unfair advantage of in any way. While such instances are rare, they do occur and the impacts on the people concerned can last for a long time.

If you think an **experienced** opponent may have done something inappropriate or made you feel uncomfortable, speak **privately** to an official Recorder. New players should be granted a great deal of latitude in these matters as many problems are usually inadvertent on their part.

- The Club has at least two Recorders and their role is to hear, and deal with as they see fit, complaints by players relating to any behaviour or decorum that does not fall strictly within the province of the Director. The Recorders are persons of high standing in the Club.
- Members who would like to clarify appropriate behaviour or clear up an incident that concerns them, may approach a Recorder in person, by phone or by email.
- The Terms of Reference for the Recorders are available on the RBC web site

## Player Code of Conduct

- *I will be polite and courteous at all times.*
  - *I will respect other people's rights to have different opinions.*
  - *I will conduct my game in a proper, mature and inoffensive manner.*
  - *I will assist new members and guests, and try to show patience and understanding.*
- *I will at all times abide by the Ethics Code and Rules of my Bridge Club, my State Association and the Australian Bridge Federation.*