

CONDENSED RULES AND GUIDANCE

Part 2 – Alerting and Play

(Compiled from ABF, BAWA and WABC documentation)

We continue our guidance by looking at Alerting and play. This Part of the guidance covers most common situations at the Bridge table and again conforms to IBF, ABF and BAWA Laws, Regulations and Rulings. Let us remember that Beginners are, of course, excused for their lapses and we should not be confrontational about any situation that arises at any time. Simply call the Director and let them deal with it.

Alerting Procedure

- If your partner makes a bid that has a special meaning in your partnership, you are required to alert this by displaying and announcing the 'Alert' card.
- This ensures that you disclose all of your conventions and system agreements to your opponents. Bridge is not a game of secret messages; the auction belongs to everyone at the table. If they desire it, your opponents are entitled to know every system agreement that you and your partner have.
- Pairs who use conventions other than Simple Stayman, Weak two's and three's, transfers to the Majors, Gerber and Blackwood should try to have at least one System Card on the table at every session in which they participate.
- The exception is casual partnerships that are arranged by the Director when a player turns up at the Club without a partner.
- It is mandatory that your card should match your partner's card when in serious competitions.
- A player may not refer to his / her systems card during the auction or play.
- When an Alert is given, it is often wise to ASK (at the appropriate time) about the meaning, do not ASSUME.
- When asked, the bidding side should give a FULL explanation of the agreement. Simply stating the common or popular name of the convention is not sufficient. Eg "Weak" is really insufficient.
- The opponents also need not ask exactly the "right" question. Any request for information should be the trigger. Opponents need only indicate the desire for information and all relevant disclosure should then be given automatically.
- Players who remember that a call requires an Alert, but cannot remember the meaning must still Alert and call the Director.
- Players who, by experience or expertise, recognize that their opponents have neglected to Alert a special agreement will be expected to protect themselves.
- If partner fails to Alert or Announce, a player may not make any indication during the auction. Showing surprise or discomfort may awaken partner to the error and would be a contravention of the Law. In addition, a player may not make allowances for partner's error. The auction should continue as if partner had acted properly.
- When the auction is over, the Declaring side must reveal to the defenders, any errors of explanation (including Alerts or Announcements that were omitted) before the opening lead is made.
- A defender must reveal any of his partner's errors, but may not do so until after the play has been completed. A defender (or any other player) who becomes aware of his own error or omission should correct it immediately. In either case the Tournament Director may be called.
- To ensure full disclosure, at the end of the auction, Declarer is encouraged to volunteer to explain it fully (including any inferences) if it is at all complicated.
- **Self-alerting calls.** There are five different types of self-alerting calls, viz.
 - ❖ • Doubles
 - ❖ • Redoubles
 - ❖ □ Cue bids of an opponent's denomination/suit
 - ❖ • All calls at the four-level or higher, except conventional opening bids
 - ❖ • Any 2 Club response to a 1NT opening bid in an uncontested auction.
- These calls are all self-alerting. However, it may be risky to make assumptions as to the meaning of such a call. A player is entitled (at the appropriate time) to ask for their own protection, but bear in mind that unnecessary questions may be more helpful to the opponents than to the enquirer's own side, and may convey unauthorised information, thereby limiting partner's options.

- For Alertable calls above 3NT, the defenders should Alert after the opening lead has been made but before it is turned up.
- No Alert is required for any bid of 2♣ over partner's 1NT opening if it requests opener to bid a four-card major, regardless of whether the Stayman bidder promises a four-card major.
- However, when it becomes evident that the Stayman bidder either does not have, or possibly does not have, a four-card major, an Alert is required at that time.

Example: 1NT–P –2♣–P
 2S–P–2NT (Alert)

If the 2NT is, or is most likely, a raise in notrump without a four-card major, an Alert is required at the time of the 2NT bid.

On Play Generally

- The usual time allowed per round is: 2 boards per round – 14 minutes; 3 boards - 20 minutes; 4 boards - 26 minutes; 5 boards - 32 minutes. The Director may choose to move players earlier or to delay the move if necessary. At sessions frequented by newer players, the Director may allow more time per round
- If a board has taken longer than usual, you must try to 'catch up' on subsequent boards. It is not fair to use more than your share of the clock and keep other players waiting.
- The warning bell should sound with 3 minutes to go. If the lead to the final board has not been made by the time the warning bell sounds, the Director should be called, and may award an artificial adjusted score, with each side's percentage dependent on the reason for not having enough time to play the board (or s/he may sometimes require the board to be played during a break).
- Do not detach a card from your hand before it is your turn to play. One poor habit that some players have is that of pulling a card out of their hand, thinking about it, putting it back, choosing another, pulling it out, putting it back,and so on. While none of the cards will be considered to have been played until it is possible that their partner can see its face, it is a very bad practice which should be avoided at all costs. The reason is that by pulling out cards and then changing your mind and putting them back, you are making it very clear to your partner that you are unsure of what you should lead and that you have a number of definite possibilities. This places partner under considerable ethical strain to ignore the information which you are conveying.
- Do not rearrange your hand when you are out of a suit. This provides additional valuable information to Declarer and could pass 'unauthorised' information to your partner.
- As Declarer do not call for a card from dummy until your Left Hand Opponent (LHO) has played a card.
- For the Director to allow you to change an unintended call (whether it be naming a card in dummy or making a bid), you must satisfy him/her that you never intended to make the call or play that you did. When talking about naming Dummy's card, the equivalent would be that you have to convince him/her that what you actually said was just a "slip of the tongue".
- The classic case where the Director is called for an alleged unintended call of a card from Dummy is in the following situation. West is declarer and this is the Club suit:

3 2 A Q

Declarer leads C2 from his hand, intending to finesse dummy's queen. North surprisingly plays the king. Far too often, Declarer says, "Queen, I mean the ace". If there is any suggestion that there was a change of mind, no matter how quickly the correction was made, then the Director should not allow a change. When he called for the queen after North played the king, this was carelessness on Declarer's part.

- So when can Declarer successfully plead an "unintended" play? In practice, it really comes down to when the Director is confident that it was a slip of the tongue. For instance, declarer is pointing to a low club in dummy's hand on the table, but says, "low spade".
- A player seeking to change an unintended call during the bidding is subject to the same principles. The player must be able to convince the Director that the bid which he made was never his intention. If it appears that it may have been a change of mind (no matter how quickly it happened), no change should be allowed.
- Using bidding boxes sometimes creates mechanical problems such as accidentally pulling out the wrong card, or having another card stuck to the bidding card as you make your bid. If this is honestly what has happened, then a change without penalty is usually allowed.

- A defender's card is considered to be played when it is in a position where the face of the card could have been seen by his partner.
- The Declarer's card is considered to be played if it is held, face up, touching or nearly touching the table, or maintained in a position to indicate that it has been played.
- Once a card has been deliberately faced on the table, then, in most cases, unfortunately Declarer is stuck with it. If the Declarer has carelessly pulled out the three instead of the ace which he meant to, the three will have to be played. If s/he has momentarily forgotten that hearts are trumps and has tried to ruff with a spade, then the spade which he played will have to remain as the played card.
- Finally, Dummy's card is played by declarer naming it, after which Dummy picks up the card and places it in the played position. Although not common in Australia, it is also permissible for Declarer to play a card from Dummy by leaning across and touching or picking it up himself.
- Any player has the right to inspect all cards in a 'quitted' or finished trick (trick turned face down) until s/he has turned their own card face down. So you might like to get into the habit of not turning your card over until you are ready to play to the next trick.
- Dummy or either defender may draw attention to any card pointed in the wrong direction until the lead to the next trick.
- To save time, "Claiming" without playing out the whole hand is encouraged. Declarer should state her or his intentions when doing so, e.g. "Drawing trumps leading from the top, then playing the three top hearts", or "I will give you the ace of clubs", etc.
- The Laws specifically state that once a Claim is made there can be no further play. If someone disagrees with the 'Claim', the Director should be called. What normally happens is that someone says, "Play it out please." This contravenes the Laws of the game. So be careful, call the Director and just wait.
- When the Director comes to the table, s/he may take the Claimer away from the table and will ask the Claimer to repeat the statement made at the time of the claim (remembering that often this is nothing at all). S/he will then ask the Claimer why he thinks he will make those tricks. The opponents will now be given the opportunity to say why they don't think that the claim is correct. The Director (and only the Director) now has the power to decide whether or not to allow the claim and how many tricks are to be given to each side.
- During play you are not allowed (without permission) to touch or handle your opponents' cards. If appropriate, ask your opponent to show you a particular card.
- You've revoked (or so the opponents claim) A 'revoke' is a failure to follow suit when you are able to do so. The important thing is that you should never try to prove whether there has, or has not, been a revoke by looking in the tricks that have already been played. The Laws strictly prohibit players from looking at quitted tricks ... and the absolute very worst thing you can do is to start turning over other players' cards. So, leave the cards alone and call the Director!
- When the Director arrives at the table to investigate the possibility of a revoke, s/he is only interested in whether it has allegedly happened on the most recent trick, or in a few circumstances, on the trick immediately preceding. If the revoke may have happened any earlier, the Director will not care - there is nothing that can be done until the hand is over. S/he will tell you to play it out. At the end of the hand, with the Director in attendance, the played cards can be turned over in an orderly manner; and the truth will be revealed. If a revoke has occurred the Director will rule accordingly.
- If you realise that you have revoked, you should say something straight away. The quicker you admit it, the less painful the consequences are likely to be for your side. Again, call the Director. The reason why timing is of the essence is that up to a certain point, the Director will allow you to correct the revoke. That means that you get to take back the card you played in error and follow suit. (If you are a defender, your originally played card becomes a penalty card.) You can correct a revoke up until the time a member of your side plays to the next trick. So, even if the trick has been quitted, all players have turned over their cards, and maybe even a lead has been made to the next trick, it may still not be too late to correct a revoke.
- At the end of a hand ensure that you do not mix up, or pick up, your cards until the result is agreed with the opponents.
- Please shuffle your cards before returning them to the correct slot in the board.
- The North player is responsible for ensuring the boards are not 'fouled' before they are sent to the next table.

- After a board has been played, you may NOT, without permission, remove someone's hand to look at it. If you have received permission, only one hand at a time should be out of the board.

On Dummy Play

- Dummy should lay out the cards before writing down details or entering the contract in the Bridgmate to ensure that the other players at the table are not kept waiting.
- The trump suit should be laid out on Dummy's right.
- Cards in each suit should be laid out in sequence from high to low.
- From the lead of the first card Dummy has very limited abilities.
 - ❖ Dummy may not ask for a review of the auction.
 - ❖ Dummy may not draw Declarer's attention to anything except that he is about to lead from the wrong hand or ask if he is out of a suit played.
 - ❖ Dummy is not entitled to call the Director during play when there has been an infraction or any other problem has arisen. Dummy may call the Director after the hand is finished if s/he has observed a possible infraction during play.
 - ❖ Dummy may not touch a card before receiving instructions from the Declarer. This includes playing a card even when it is a singleton.
 - ❖ Once Declarer has played or nominated a card from Dummy, it must be played. Dummy cannot say, "Your hand partner" and have the nominated card withdrawn. Only the Defenders can request that a card be played from the correct hand.
 - ❖ If Declarer designates a suit, but not the rank, Dummy must play the lowest card of the suit indicated.
 - ❖ If Declarer designates a rank but not a suit, Dummy must continue the suit in which dummy won the last trick.
 - ❖ Dummy has the right to see all cards played

Remember, if there is a disagreement or difference of opinion which requires mediation, call the Director and leave it at that. There is seldom anything more frustrating and difficult for the Director than to arrive at a table where the players are squabbling with one another.

Therefore we should endeavour to:-

- Welcome new opponents to your table.
- Be courteous to the opponents (and your partner) at all times.
- Play tough, be competitive, but be a good sport.
- Don't stare at opponents, their cards, or where in their hand they play a card from.
- Claim if the result is clear.
- Remember that Beginners should be excused, not berated, for their lapses.
- Do not conduct lengthy, loud or detailed post-mortems.
- Make the effort to catch up if you have had a slow hand, and
- Thank your opponents before moving on to the next table.

***And last, but certainly not least, ENJOY THE GAME...
and remember at all times, that it is only a game - even if there
seem to be a lot of rules attached.***