

Procedures & the Laws of Duplicate Bridge

From Suzanne Goodall



One of the reasons I was asked to write these articles is that so very little is taught about the etiquette of

bridge. This is a little odd since it is such an important aspect of the game. The majority of people are polite and well mannered, but that's not the same as understanding the correct procedures of the game outside the actual play.

Of course the reason **Bridge Etiquette** and correct procedures are barely touched in upon is that Bridge is such a complex game that it is difficult enough for our many fine teachers to cover the basics of the game let alone the finer points of what is acceptable at the table.

When deciding to learn Bridge, I chose to do a course of lessons with Peter Smith. Following the lessons, I played in supervised sessions for a few weeks which were held in the supper room at SPBC. Then I was pushed in at the deep end by playing 'in what was called the big room' against seasoned and top players. For the most part, everyone was patient with me and my partner although I quickly learned what NOT to do!

People often become very distressed when the Director is called but in actual fact you **MUST** call the Director in the event of an irregularity or a 'possible irregularity'. (As a matter of fact **NOT calling the Director is in contravention of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge.**) Our capable Directors spend a great deal of time learning the Laws of Duplicate Bridge and occasionally consult with other Directors. They also have meetings to discuss problem areas. They have access to the book which covers The Laws and as the name implies it reads like a legal document. In my opinion one has to have the ability of a lawyer to interpret many of The Laws. So their job is certainly not an easy one by any measure.

Some people will say things such as 'it is just a friendly game' or 'we are not playing for a sheep station'. So why bother with formalities? These sayings may sound like a good defence to ignoring the Law but I am sure that many of the same people are happy to place first or get their master points awarded or receive a new ranking certificate or even sometimes win a prize.

When we use the expression that 'the director is there to restore equity', it does not mean to make us all of equal ability but rather to make the results fair. This is because your score affects not only you and your opponents but everyone in the room. Say, for example you are North/South and the opponents revoke. You see it but ignore it. They score their game of 4H plus one when there are only 10 tricks available if it were not for the revoke you ignored. So they have received an illegal bonus not available to the other East/West pairs. You, perhaps by trying to be nice, have now disadvantaged every other East/West pair in the room by allowing your opponents a better score.

Besides collecting table monies, scoring and many other tasks, our Directors have to sort out complex problems including calming things down when there is a heated discussion or disagreement at the table. We must **NEVER try to sort things out ourselves**. We should not turn over cards unless we are asked to do so by the Director. We should not touch anyone's cards but our own. After a board is played we should not pull cards out of their respective slots to see what partner or the opponents had. This can easily cause the cards to be wrongly placed and the board to be 'fouled'. Now the Director and the next to play the board have big problems due to your actions.

As I said, we are all reasonably polite and well behaved but when things go pear-shaped we can turn into different characters. Bridge, like all competitive sports has an element of stress and tension.

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Occasionally mild-mannered well-behaved people can turn into monsters.

Things which may seem minor to some may seem important to others. In psychology there have been studies on encroaching on the personal body space of others. At bridge we are all very close and simply taking up too much space at the table can sometimes seem like a grievous offence. So try to be thoughtful of these things by not cluttering the table or blocking the view of any player.

Also we need to be careful not to distract the opponents. Any distraction can break your concentration. A novice playing in a supervised session at another club told me he misplayed a hand because a Committee member made an announcement about

club business during play rather than waiting for the end of the session. Someone else told me they misplayed an easy hand because in the middle of play someone at the table called the Director to have the air conditioning adjusted. In both cases simple courtesy and common sense would have prevented the distraction.

So we need to be careful about affecting the game of others by loud discussions and anything else that common sense would suggest might disrupt the game.

So in closing don't worry about becoming an expert on the procedures and the laws as we have our capable Directors to sort out those matters.

But DO call the Director every time something goes wrong at the table.