

# Ethics and Etiquette in Bridge

Hugh Grosvenor Gold Coast Congress 2016

Introduction:

Bridge is governed by the laws of the game and regulations framed by the organizing body. These laws and regulations also help to define the codes of ethics and etiquette that are expected to be followed by all participants. Some of this may appear a little technical however the purpose of these codes are simple:

- To foster a pleasant and courteous environment
- To ensure a fair contest where only authorized information is used by a partnership and all partnership agreements and experience are disclosed to the opponents as required.

If you keep these goals in mind you will not go far wrong!

Etiquette:

Etiquette in bridge deals with the way players should behave in their interactions with their partner, their opponents, directors and other officials involved in running the tournament. Good manners and friendly behaviour are the order of the day. It also concerns matter of correct procedure.

Some players seem to be of the opinion that parts of bridge etiquette are an optional extra – this is not the case. The Laws of Duplicate Bridge dictate what is required:

## **LAW 74 – CONDUCT AND ETIQUETTE**

### **A. Proper Attitude**

1. A player should maintain a courteous attitude at all times.
2. A player should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game.
3. Every player should follow uniform and correct procedure in calling and playing.

### **B. Etiquette**

As a matter of courtesy a player should refrain from:

1. Paying insufficient attention to the game.
2. Making gratuitous comments during the auction and play.
3. Detaching a card before it is his turn to play.
4. Prolonging play unnecessarily (as in playing on although he knows that all the tricks are surely his) for the purpose of disconcerting an opponent.
5. Summoning and addressing the Director in a manner that is discourteous to him or to other contestants.

### **C. Violations of Procedure**

The following are examples of violations of procedure:

1. Using different designations for the same call.
2. Indicating approval or disapproval of a call or play.
3. Indicating the expectation or intention of winning or losing a trick that has not been completed.
4. Commenting or acting during the auction or play so as to call attention to a significant occurrence, or to the number of tricks still required for success.

5. Looking intently at any other player during the auction and play, or at another player's hand as for the purpose of seeing his cards or of observing the place from which he draws a card (but it is appropriate to act on information acquired by accidentally seeing an opponent's card).
6. Showing an obvious lack of further interest in a deal (as by folding one's cards).
7. Varying the normal tempo of bidding or play for the purpose of disconcerting an opponent.
8. Leaving the table needlessly before the round is called.

Since this is part of the Laws adherence to correct etiquette is required and breaches may be penalized by the Director. Good etiquette will also make the game more pleasant and fairer for all involved.

Ethics:

Good ethics in bridge are in some ways harder to define. There are few laws that refer directly to ethics.

## **LAW 72 – GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

### **A. Observance of Laws**

Duplicate bridge tournaments should be played in strict accordance with the Laws. The chief object is to obtain a higher score than other contestants whilst complying with the lawful procedures and ethical standards set out in these laws.

This clearly implies that the intention of the laws as a whole is to set out what is allowed and what is not – good ethical behaviour is complying with the laws. Being actively ethical is complying with the laws to the fullest extent and trying to play within the spirit of the laws.

Full Disclosure:

One of the clearest areas where good ethics are required is in full disclosure of your partnership agreements. The laws do not allow for secret agreements. If your opponents ask you for information regarding bids or plays you should try to give them as much information as you have about agreements between you and your partner. This is a difficult area to enforce since your opponents and the Director are unlikely to know the extent of your agreements. It is up to all players to be as open and accommodating in this as possible. Treat them as you would like to be treated.

Authorised Information:

You are only allowed to base your actions on authorised information. If you have unauthorised information you are only permitted to make choices that are not affected by the unauthorised information. Unauthorised information may come from the tempo of your partner's bids or plays, their demeanour, extraneous comments, failure to alert, explanations of bids and countless other sources. Authorised information generally only comes from what they actually bid and the cards that they played.

Incorrect Explanations:

There are some situations that arise where the opponents may be unaware that anything untoward has occurred, particularly where your partner has given an incorrect explanation of a bid or play. You are required to call the Director at the first legal opportunity and bring this to their attention. If you are the declaring side this would be before the opening lead is made. If you are the defending side this would be at the end of the hand.

### Tempo:

It is good practice to attempt to maintain an even tempo in bidding and play. This is obviously not always possible since you may sometimes need to think. By maintaining good tempo you minimise ethical problems that your partner might face.

It is specifically forbidden by the laws to vary your tempo with the intention of attempting to deceive the opponents – for instance hesitating before playing a singleton or thinking for a long time before passing when you never intended to bid.

### Conclusion:

- Be courteous and pleasant to your partner, opponents and directing staff.
- Avoid criticism of your partner or opponents (however justifiable you think it might be!)
- Avoid post-mortems particularly if you still have hands to play.
- If you think that there is a problem call the director.
- Accept director rulings with good grace – you can always enquire later about avenues of appeal.
- Try to maintain an even tempo in bidding and play.
- Do not base your decisions on extraneous information that you may get from your partner.
- Disclose as much information to the opponents as possible about your partnership agreements (by alerting appropriately and giving clear and complete answers to questions).
- Try to be consistent in all matters of procedure at the table – bidding, playing the cards, alerting, announcements etc.
- Have fun – rumour has it that bridge is a game!