

“It’s only a game”



BRIDGE BEHAVIOUR and MISBEHAVIOUR
A Welsh Bridge Union Guide

Bridge Behaviour



INTRODUCTION

A recurring complaint in bridge is that enjoyment of the game can be compromised by the poor behaviour of a minority of players.¹ The WBU Management Committee therefore set up a working party to look at these issues. This policy is based on their report, revised in the light of comments received following publication on the WBU website as a consultation document.

The policy considers what should be expected of players and what could be done to improve behaviour at the table.

It distinguishes between two aspects of behaviour at the bridge table:

- a) Compliance with the Laws governing the game itself, including the mechanics of play, correction of mistakes and deterring, or redress in the event of, unauthorised information;
- b) Conduct and etiquette (Law 74).

The importance which a player attaches to these two aspects of behaviour will depend partly on his or her own temperament and partly on the level at which he or she is playing. While it is not universally true, it tends to be the case that the higher the level of the competition, the more concerned a player is with a) and the less with b). Conversely, players in clubs with a very social ethos tend to be concerned more with pleasantness and enjoyment, and less with stringent enforcement of the (other) rules.

There is, however, *no intrinsic conflict between the two aspects of behaviour*. Experienced players can explain politely to their opponents why they are calling the Director; tournament novices can accept that a mistake which would have gone unpunished in their local clubs must necessarily be rectified (*by the Director*) at a national final or a green-pointed congress, where more than a pleasant evening out or a few local points is at stake.

It should be noted that the Laws of Duplicate Bridge² apply to all levels of competition, from club to international, and that no distinction is made in the Laws between these different levels of competition. The distinction tends to be in the manner of enforcement: the rules (other than Law 74) are less rigidly enforced at social and club level than in high-level tournaments in which most of the participants will be expert players. The policy therefore acknowledges the differences in practice between club and tournament bridge without in any way suggesting that the Laws do not apply to club bridge.

To address the matter of bad behaviour, the WBU has adopted the following policy.

¹ See responses to member questionnaire 2010-11.

² The Laws of Duplicate Bridge. 2007 edn., promulgated by TheWorld Bridge Federation and published in Wales by the Welsh Bridge Union. Available online at <http://welshbridgeunion.info/wp-content/uploads/2007LawsComplete1.pdf>

SUMMARY

1. Policy

We will promote a playing environment which, by improving attitudes and behaviour at bridge, promotes enjoyment of the game by players of all standards.

2. Implementation

We will translate our intentions into actions throughout clubs and tournaments, by asking players to observe the spirit, as well as the letter, of Law 74 which concerns conduct and etiquette; and club organisers and tournament directors to act firmly to curb bad behaviour.

3. Operation

New players: before they officially join the club, new players should be given some instruction on what is expected of them and of their opponents when they sit down at the table, in terms not just of bidding and play, but of the behaviour expected of them. Clubs might consider asking new players to sign up to a code of behaviour before accepting them into the club.

Club members: most club players are there to enjoy the game, and should feel confident that their enjoyment will not be spoilt by “experts” who invoke rules devised for tournament play, or who belittle them for their lack of expertise. The Club Director plays a key role in ensuring this enjoyment.

Expert players: some expert players tend to regard the social aspect of the game as secondary to the competitive aspect. The higher the level of the tournament, the greater the bias towards competitive rigour and away from social convention. Deviations from the rules are expected to be punished. It is therefore important:

- i) that players in tournaments be asked to observe the same standards of conduct and etiquette that would be expected at club level, and do not allow their expectation of higher bridge standards to curtail their observance of social customs such as politeness and tolerance;
- ii) that players seeking to move from club to competition be prepared for the more stringent enforcement of the Laws, *especially those relating to unauthorised information*, before their first event. This can be achieved only by advice and/or mentoring at club level.



EXPANSION

1. Policy

The two aspects of bridge behaviour that cause upset are unauthorised information and failure to observe social etiquette. Some explanation of the Laws relating to these aspects may help members to avoid upsetting other players at the table:

1.1 Conduct and Etiquette

Law 74 applies. The full text is given in Appendix A below, but in summary it says:

- *maintain a courteous attitude at all times;*
- *avoid remarks that might interfere with another player's enjoyment of the game;*
- *don't make gratuitous comments;*
- *be courteous in calling the Director;*
- *avoid staring at your opponent, or looking at another player's hand;*
- *stay at the table until the round is called unless you have a good reason not to.*

In top-level tournaments such as the Gold Cup final, and especially in international tournaments (where there is a screen across the table to prevent you from seeing your partner and one of your opponents), no one much cares whether you are friendly, as long as you're not positively rude. Players' concentration is such that they may not even notice if you get up and leave the table for a few minutes.

That is no excuse for players who are used to such tournaments to replicate this chillier atmosphere in congresses and other competitions in Wales (or indeed elsewhere). Most bridge players want to have a nice, social time as well as playing the best bridge they can, and their enjoyment of an event can be enhanced or damaged by the behaviour of others.

It is important for the future of bridge in Wales that new players enter the game at all levels. Any behaviour that prevents someone from enjoying the game is likely to deter him or her from continuing to play. It is incumbent upon more experienced players to ensure that an opponent's first experience of club or tournament play is not his last. The fact that a Grand Master feels no need for social interaction, and may indeed find it easier to concentrate without it, does not relieve him or her of responsibility for other players' enjoyment. While it is not always necessary to chat freely to an opponent, it is a minimum requirement to say "Hello" at the start of the round and "Thank you" at the end, unless you know the opponent in question very well and know with certainty that their preferences are the same as your own in this regard. It is also a minimum requirement that you do not browbeat a less experienced opponent, either deliberately or because that is your unfortunate personality, by quizzing him about his system, by criticising his speed of play or by suggesting that he has done something hopeless. (Browbeating your partner may also upset the opponents.)

Only if specifically asked should a more experienced player offer an opinion on an opponent's bidding or play.

Therefore:

The Welsh Bridge Union expects players of all standards:

- a) to observe the usual social courtesies, whatever the context;**
- b) at a minimum, to say "Hello" at the beginning of the round and "Thank you" at the end of the round;**
- c) to refrain from criticism, either direct or implied, of an opponent's bidding or play;**
- d) to refrain from bullying behaviour such as interrogating an opponent about his system or displaying impatience or amusement at mistakes or making a claim which the opponent at the table may not understand.**
- e) to refrain from shouting at or acerbically criticising their own partners, since this may upset less experienced opponents.**



1.2 Unauthorised information

Law 16 applies. It, too, is quoted in full in Appendix A, but in brief it says:

Authorised information: *Players are authorised to base their calls and plays on information from legal calls and or plays, and from mannerisms of opponents. In other words, you may make any inference you choose from bids made or not made, and from cards played or not played, and also from anything your opponents give away by their demeanour.*

Unauthorised information: *extraneous information that may suggest a call or play, as by means of a remark, a question, a reply to a question, or by unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speech, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement, mannerism or the like (and exposed cards and irregular bids such as insufficient bids or calls out of rotation).*

In your local bridge club, if you accidentally pull two cards out of your hand, declarer will probably tell you to put one of them back, and no more will be said. Likewise, if your partner squeaks “Oh!” when you explain a bid wrongly, your opponents will probably laugh and simply get on with the hand. This is not the case in tournament play, at least at high levels. Your opponents will (politely, it is hoped) tell you that they are calling the Director, to make sure that no one has gained an unfair advantage from the information you and your partner have inadvertently given each other.

The reason for this is that in tournaments, especially in high-level tournaments, a lot is at stake. No one gets rich on cash prizes in Britain, but a player’s standing with (for example) other players with whom he or she might want to form a team, or with the selectors for the international team, may depend on achieving a good result in the tournament. In international tournaments, qualification for the World Championships may be at stake. It is much more important, therefore, that no damage be caused to opponents by unauthorised information.

Many, but not all, regular tournament players know the law on unauthorised information reasonably well, but surprisingly few of them know all of it, or how it is applied in practice. No player should attempt to instruct another, at the table, in the correct application of the law: he or she should always refer the matter to the Director.

Therefore:

The Welsh Bridge Union expects players of all standards:

- a) **to accept that unauthorised information, however inadvertent, may give their own side an unfair advantage and damage opponents.**
- b) **to accept an opponent’s decision to refer a possible breach of the Laws to the Director, without argument, without taking offence and without assuming that he or she is being accused of cheating;**
- c) **to refrain from attempting to apply the Laws at the table without reference to the Director;**
- d) **against an less experienced opponent, to explain the reason why that opponent’s action is being referred to the Director for a ruling;**
- e) **to be polite and refrain from criticism, either of the opponents or of the Director when asking for a Director’s ruling; and**
- f) **to accept the Director’s ruling without argument.**

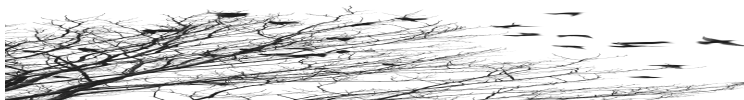
2. Implementation

Simply recognising the need to build improvement into attitudes and behaviour at club and tournament levels will not make it happen.

The Welsh Bridge Union therefore intends to promulgate this policy throughout the organisation, and to encourage those in positions of influence to implement it by guidance and by example.

A copy of the policy, and a leaflet summarising its main points, will be distributed to all affiliated clubs and to tournament directors.

Any player who believes that another player has behaved in an unacceptable manner towards him or her (or indeed towards a third party) should bring it to the attention of the tournament Director or of another person in authority. If the player feels unable to do so at the time of the incident and in the presence of the offending party, he or she may approach the Director or other person in authority privately; the Director (or other person) should then speak to the offending party in private and warn him or her that such behaviour will not be tolerated.



2.1 Management Committee

The Management Committee will review the content and operation of this policy at appropriate intervals.

Where appropriate, the Management Committee will issue new guidance to members, clubs and Directors to encourage compliance with the policy.

The Management Committee will endeavour to identify and address impediments to the effective working of the policy.

2.2 Club and Area Officers

It is the responsibility of club and area officers to ensure that members, new players and visitors are aware of the content of this policy. Club officers and Committees should also deal with persistent bad behaviour, either on the part of an individual player or where the behaviour in question has become part of the club's culture.

If the same player is the subject of several reports of bad behaviour, the Club committee must take action.

It is also the responsibility of club and area officers to offer where necessary guidance to players moving from club bridge to tournament bridge on the different level of enforcement of the Laws (other than Law 74) in tournament play. It may be appropriate to offer short seminars (for example half an hour before the start of play on a club night or at an area tournament) to tournament novices. The aim of any guidance provided should be to inform players what to expect and how to respond to new and difficult situations such as Director calls, not to cause any anxiety.

It is worth noting that where club officers inform players of forthcoming competitions and encourage them to enter, the take-up increases. All clubs should consider encouraging new members to enter competitions once they have had a chance to become familiar with duplicate bridge. That is not to say that more established members who have already indicated that they have no interest in non-club bridge should be pressed into entering competitions or playing in congresses: the approach needs to be tailored to the individual player.

If no new players come forward to play in tournaments, bridge in Wales will continue to decline, both in numbers and in standard. While most members may not be interested in international competition, no member would wish Wales to become incapable of competing.

2.3 Directors

In clubs, the Director generally acts as host (in the general sense) to make sure that everything runs smoothly and everyone can enjoy playing bridge. An important role at club level is to act as mediator in the event of a dispute, limiting any annoyance or embarrassment which might spoil the enjoyment of the evening.



If anything untoward happens at the table, the Director should be called. Players should not be embarrassed to call the Director, or annoyed if their opponents do; the Director is just a referee or umpire, keeping control and ensuring that everything proceeds properly.

Infractions of the rules such as revokes, playing out of turn and so on are dealt with by the Director at the table, and apart from a possible slight embarrassment are soon forgotten. A good Director knows the regular players and will know whether a player is a serial offender.

The Director has the authority to assess and apply disciplinary penalties on any Club night; the member has the right to appeal in writing to the club's committee.

It should be a matter of routine for the Director to make the Club committee aware of any persistent behaviour issues.

While allowances may be made for inexperienced players' infractions of Laws other than Law 74, the standing of the player should not affect the Director's view of rude or aggressive behaviour or the action he takes in response. Angry gestures; badgering; rudeness; insinuations; intimidation; profanity; threats or violence; negative comments concerning opponents' bidding; gloating over good results; constant and gratuitous lessons and analyses at the table; arguing with the Director's ruling, are all matters which should attract at least a private word with the culprit, and in many cases formal action.

It is for clubs to decide the threshold for disciplinary action, but club Directors should be made aware of the club's policy and should apply it even-handedly.

The Club Director can help to motivate members by saying "Thank you for making it easy to direct".

2.4 Laws and Ethics Committee

The Welsh Bridge Union has a Laws and Ethics Committee, whose role is to enforce discipline. Rarely will examples of bad behaviour come before the Committee, but for members' information, its terms of reference include (as well as hearing final appeals from tournament Appeals Committees on other breaches of the Laws) consideration of complaints made in writing to the WBU Secretary, conducting hearings and imposing penalties which may include fines, suspension or expulsion, in relation to the following:

- whilst playing bridge offending against the accepted standards of conduct or playing unfairly;
- misconduct in connection with the game of bridge at any time whatsoever; or
- in connection with the bridge, conducting oneself unreasonably so as to give offence to any other individual.

3. Operation

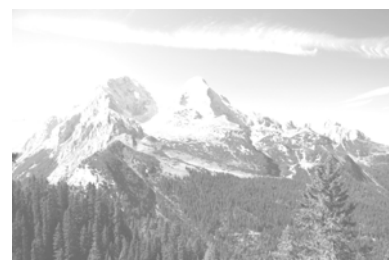
3.1 New players:

New players may be drawn from the ranks of students at bridge classes, from rubber bridge or from unaffiliated, “social”, clubs such as those associated with tennis clubs. Their standard will vary, from experienced rubber bridge players to novices just out of evening classes. What they will all lack is experience of duplicate bridge (or of bridge at a particular club). All may find the greater formality and competitive nature of club duplicate daunting.

New players will be keen to play. It is important not to dampen their enthusiasm with complaints of “We don’t do that here”, or “That’s against the rules”. Existing members should be welcoming and patient, explaining unfamiliar scoring, equipment and movements and reserving instruction on rules and regulations until the new player has settled in.

New players usually find it helpful to be given a (brief) guide to the club, including:

- Playing nights, starts times and host arrangements
- Minimum dress standard (if any);
- Names of club officers and their contact details;
- A note on the club’s general approach (social or competitive) and a copy of the code of conduct, or a potted version thereof (not a list of 72 points);
- (Optional) A form for new members to sign when they have had a chance to read the booklet, accepting the Club’s code of conduct; it is important not to make this too much of a formal induction or initiative test, which might be off-putting.



New players should also be introduced to the Membership Secretary, part of whose role is to create a supportive and comfortable atmosphere where new players can relax and where their comments and questions can be received openly and addressed.

3.2 Club members:

Most members of most clubs just want to play cards and socialise, having no ambition beyond coming top on the night. This is not a defect. On the other hand, many clubs are proud of their *illuminati*, those players who have risen up the ranks and particularly those who have made it into the international team. Club players are generally indulgent of young opponents, especially those with talent and ambition. While there are indeed clubs which actively discourage good players from visiting or even joining, setting obstacles in their way, this often (though not exclusively) results from bad experiences with expert players in the past. Those who run the club may worry that the enjoyment of the majority will be spoilt if they fear being brought to book by hot-shot players for minor misdemeanours.

While the Membership Secretary and Director have a role to play, it is also the responsibility of the players themselves to encourage better behaviour.

Examples of behaviour that is likely to cause offence, and also of actions that might lead to an accusation of unethical behaviour³, include:

“I was disappointed you didn’t welcome us to your table”

“I understand it was a difficult hand but I thought your play was excessively slow”

“I felt you hesitated too long before passing and your partner might have inferred that you had some strength”

“I would be happier if you always played out the hand rather than claiming the rest”

(A fuller list of examples is given at Appendix B.)

³ It is almost unheard of for a player to accuse another of cheating, at least to his face, and for good reason: an unsubstantiated allegation is likely to rebound on the accuser and may result in disciplinary action or, worse, litigation. The term “unethical behaviour” tends to be used instead, perhaps because it appears to encompass unintentional breaches of the Laws as well as deliberate misconduct, whereas the term ‘cheating’ implies intent.

3.3 Expert players:

All bridge players like to win. Seasoned tournament players don't necessarily want to win more, but they do tend to have a certain amount of ambition, to reach a better standard and to play in higher-level competitions. With this comes an interest in, for example, bidding theory or card-play techniques, which they may spend countless hours (and quite a lot of money) studying. It is therefore not surprising if they get annoyed when their hard work is brought to nought by an opponent's giving away unauthorised information and thereby gaining an unfair advantage.

Being annoyed doesn't, however, justify expressing that annoyance at the table. It is very rare for a player to cheat deliberately; what, then, is the point in berating a hapless opponent for an unintended slip? Be polite, explain the problem and call the Director. (It's even less sensible to berate partner for a mistake: shouting at partner is likely to lead only to another mistake on the next hand. Save the criticism for the bar afterwards.)



The majority of expert players are friendly, polite and helpful; those who do not fall into this category are reminded that gaining an advantage by frightening the opponents is as bad (and as unlawful) as giving unauthorised information. Since inexperienced players may be too nervous to call the Director against an experienced opponent, there is an onus on expert players to behave in a way which is above reproach.

A further reminder for expert players is that trying to put one over your opponents by making bids which have no other purpose than to fox them is a) dishonourable and b) unethical. Your opponents will be left feeling small (and may decide to retreat to the comfort of the bridge club, thus depriving Welsh bridge of human and financial resources); and you will eventually acquire a reputation for dubious tactics.

Any senior player who hears his or her partner failing in politeness or bullying the opponents has a duty to address the breach of Law 74. If you are aware that your partner, or one of your team-mates, is a serial offender in this regard, you might consider finding another partner, or different team-mates, as you would surely do if you knew they were consistently breaching any other of the laws of bridge.

That said, club players and those playing in tournaments for fun should recognise that for serious players, bridge is a serious matter. In tournaments they should not expect as much tolerance for (for example) failures to alert, or bids after partner's obvious hesitation, as they would receive in their local clubs. What they should be able to expect is politeness in addressing the infraction, and an opportunity to learn from their mistake.

4. Penalties for bad behaviour

Club Directors should be guided by club policy, but are expected to deal carefully and firmly with bad behaviour. While a quiet word will deal with minor problems, Directors should be prepared to apply penalties for significant and/or repeated bad behaviour.

The English Bridge Union has been considering the penalties appropriate for bad behaviour in tournaments, and will publish its recommendations soon. The WBU expects to adopt the EBU's policy and practice.

APPENDIX A: LAWS 16 (Unauthorised Information) and 74 (Conduct and Etiquette)

LAW 16: AUTHORIZED AND UNAUTHORIZED INFORMATION

A. Players' Use of Information

1. A player may use information in the auction or play if:
 - (a) it derives from the legal calls and plays of the current board (including illegal calls and plays that are accepted) and is unaffected by unauthorized information from another source; or
 - (b) it is authorized information from a withdrawn action (see D); or
 - (c) it is information specified in any law or regulation to be authorized or, when not otherwise specified, arising from the legal procedures authorized in these laws and in regulations (but see B1 following); or
 - (d) it is information that the player possessed before he took his hand from the board (Law 7B) and the Laws do not preclude his use of this information.
2. Players may also take account of their estimate of their own score, of the traits of their opponents, and any requirement of the tournament regulations.
3. No player may base a call or play on other information (such information being designated extraneous)
4. If there is a violation of this law causing damage the Director adjusts the score in accordance with Law 12C.

B. Extraneous Information from Partner

1. (a) After a player makes available to his partner extraneous information that may suggest a call or play, as for example by a remark, a question, a reply to a question, an unexpected¹ alert or failure to alert, or by unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement, or mannerism, the partner may not choose from among logical alternatives one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the extraneous information.
 - (b) logical alternative action is one that, among the class of players in question and using the methods of the partnership, would be given serious consideration by a significant proportion of such players, of whom it is judged some might select it.
2. When a player considers that an opponent has made such information available and that damage could well result he may announce, unless prohibited by the Regulating Authority (which may require that the Director be called), that he reserves the right to summon the Director later (the opponents should summon the Director immediately if they dispute the fact that unauthorized information might have been conveyed).
3. When a player has substantial reason to believe that an opponent who had a logical alternative has chosen an action that could have been suggested by such information, he should summon the Director when play ends². The Director shall assign an adjusted score (see Law 12C) if he considers that an infraction of law has resulted in an advantage for the offender.

C. Extraneous Information from Other Sources

1. When a player accidentally receives unauthorized information about a board he is playing or has yet to play, as by looking at the wrong hand; by overhearing calls, results or remarks; by seeing cards at another table; or by seeing a card belonging to another player at his own table before the auction begins, the Director should be notified forthwith, preferably by the recipient of the information.
2. If the Director considers that the information could interfere with normal play he may, before any call has been made:

¹ i.e. unexpected in relation to the basis of his action.

² It is not an infraction to call the Director earlier or later.

APPENDIX A: LAWS 16 (Unauthorised Information) and 74 (Conduct and Etiquette)

- (a) adjust the players' positions at the table, if the type of contest and scoring permit, so that the player with information about one hand will hold that hand; or
 - (b) if the form of competition allows of it order the board redealt for those contestants; or
 - (c) allow completion of the play of the board standing ready to award an adjusted score if he judges that unauthorized information may have affected the result; or
 - (d) award an artificial adjusted score.
3. If such unauthorized information is received after the first call in the auction has been made and before completion of the play of the board the Director proceeds as in 2(c).

D. Information from Withdrawn Calls and Plays

When a call or play has been withdrawn as these laws provide:

1. For a non-offending side, all information arising from a withdrawn action is authorized, whether the action be its own or its opponents'.
2. For an offending side, information arising from its own withdrawn action and from withdrawn actions of the non-offending side is unauthorized. A player of an offending side may not choose from among logical alternative actions one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the unauthorized information.

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 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 unintentionally 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.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF BAD OR UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

- Criticising opponents or offering advice without being asked.
- Claiming when playing against beginners or weaker club members: it is less likely to cause resentment, and usually quicker, to play out the hand against such opponents
- Holding post-mortems before the end of the round (and not even then if you have no time left): players should avoid delaying others, and should keep any discussion quiet to avoid spoiling the board for the next table
- Taking advantage of any information gained inadvertently from other tables or from your partner's (unlawful) actions: players must tell the director if they acquire information inadvertently, and he or she will ensure equity.
- Hesitating between bids, while touching the bidding cards: this is bad practice and could incur a penalty if advantage was taken by the hesitator's partner of unauthorised information arising from such hesitation; the player is expected to make up his mind before touching any bidding card (including the Stop card).
- Failing to inform the opposition if you play an unusual system: it is polite to do this when you first meet (*N.B. any system used must be one allowed by the WBU*)
- Failing to alert or announce conventional bids: see alerting rules⁴
- Giving incorrect or inadequate explanations: only the alerter may explain, and only if requested by an opponent at his or her turn.
- Misuse of the Stop card: jump bids must be preceded by placing the Stop card on the table, and the next player should pause for 10 seconds before bidding (a longer pause is bad practice and may give unauthorised information to partner).
- Asking questions about opponents' understandings at the wrong times:
 - a player may ask only when it is his or her turn to bid or play a card (or when partner has led face down and has not yet turned the card over)
 - at his or her turn, a player may ask questions of the partner of the opponent who made the bid or play
 - unless, however, it affects or may affect the enquirer's action, it is recommended that questions be left until the end of the auction.
 - questions about bidding should be about the whole auction and not about a particular bid
 - if a bid is not alerted it must be taken as natural; players may not ask if an unalerted bid is natural (if it becomes apparent later on that the bid was not natural and should have been alerted, the Laws provide redress).

By following this advice, a player lessens the chance of giving unauthorised information to his or her partner, and of putting that partner in difficulties as to whether it would be proper to bid at his or her turn.

⁴ Most such bids must be alerted using the "Alert Card", although a few such as Stayman should be announced, in both cases only by the *partner* of the bidder, and not by the bidder himself. New tournament players should be made aware that in some competitions, and particularly international and overseas tournaments, the alerting rules differ from those generally in force in England and Wales.