

“It’s only a game”



BRIDGE BEHAVIOUR and MISBEHAVIOUR

Summary

Bridge Behaviour

A recurring complaint in bridge is that enjoyment of the game can be compromised by the poor behaviour of a minority of players. The WBU has therefore adopted a policy on bridge behaviour.



This leaflet is a summary of the policy, the full text of which may be found on the website at <http://www.wbu.org.uk/Members/2013/BridgeBehaviour.pdf>. A copy has also been sent to your club.

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 will depend partly on temperament and partly on the level at which he or she is playing. While it is not universally true, it tends to be that the higher the level of the competition, the more concerned a player is with a) and the less with b). 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 be rectified (*by the Director*) at a national final, where more than a pleasant evening out or a few local points is at stake.



The Laws of Duplicate Bridge¹ apply to all levels of competition, from club to international, and no distinction is made between different levels of competition. The rules (other than Law 74) are, however, 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 acknowledges the differences in practice between club and tournament bridge without in any way suggesting that the Laws do not apply to club bridge.

¹ The Laws of Duplicate Bridge. 2007 edn., promulgated by The World Bridge Federation and published in Wales by the Welsh Bridge Union. Available 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.



Conduct and Etiquette (Law 74)

In summary:

- *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, and especially in international tournaments (where there is a screen across the table to prevent you from seeing your partner), 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 tournament players to replicate this chillier atmosphere in congresses and other competitions. 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 affected by the behaviour of others.

The Welsh Bridge Union expects players of all standards:

- a) to observe the usual social courtesies, whatever the context;**
- b) 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.**

Unauthorised information (Law 16)

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).

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 call the Director, without argument, without taking offence and without assuming that he or she is being accused of cheating;**
- c) to refrain from trying 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; and**
- f) to accept the Director's ruling without argument.**

* Many regular tournament players know the law on unauthorised information reasonably well, but surprisingly few know all of it. 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.