

PRACTICAL LAWS FOR YOU (Part One)

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Contract Bridge is probably one of the few games where so many players know so little of the rules (a.k.a. the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge) and myths abound. Here are some things about the laws that all players should know.

Calling the Director

This is the most important thing: If there is an irregularity, call the director (politely please)!

In most situations, that is all you need to know. Your friendly director is here to help you sort out problems and give rulings according to the bridge laws. In fact, the laws require you to call the director whenever attention has been drawn to an irregularity (L9B) and forbid making your own ruling (L72A6, L10A). So, if your opponents refuse, just say politely, "I think we need the director to sort out this problem" and call him/her yourself. When the director is called, no one should take it personally as an accusation or insult!

Dummy's rights

It is a myth that dummy cannot call the director. He cannot draw attention to irregularity during play (L9A, L43A) but can do so afterwards (L9A, L42B). However, once an irregularity has been noticed, he is as obliged as any other player to call the director (L9B). He can also give information, in the Director's presence, as to fact or law (L42A).

Dummy is also allowed to ask declarer when he has failed to follow suit whether he has a card of the suit led and to try to prevent (but not to correct) any irregularity by declarer (e.g. leading from the wrong hand) (L42B). He loses these last 2 rights however, if he looks at any defender's hand on his own initiative or looks at declarer's hand (L43A).

Bidding

Mechanical error

What happens when you accidentally put down the wrong bidding card? Well, you can change to your intended call if you do so or try to do so without "pause for thought" (L25A) and partner has not yet called. If unsure, please call the director!

Wrong explanation of bids

What happens when the hand held differs greatly from the explanation? The possibilities are:

- the agreement was explained wrongly (mistaken explanation)
- the explanation was correct, but the player either forgot (a mistaken bid or misbid) or deliberately violated his agreements (a psyche)

If this happens to opponents, just call the director to sort it out. In general, redress is given for damage caused by mistaken explanations (L21B, L40C), but there is no penalty for misbids or psyches (L75B). Director usually assumes mistaken explanation unless convinced otherwise (with the help of opponent's convention card or system notes).

What if it happens to you? If you realise later on that your own explanation of partner's bid is wrong or incomplete, call the Director immediately (L75D) to correct it.

If you believe your partner has given a mistaken explanation, do not correct the error during the bidding period. Declarer or dummy should call the director after the final pass and correct the explanation. Defenders must wait till the play is over to do so (L75D), as partner must not be alerted to his error while it can affect his bidding or defence.

If you have made a psyche or misbid because you forgot the system, but subsequently remember it, you are under no obligation to tell the opponents (L75B).

