

Bridge Manners, Etiquette and Conduct

Model Behavior vs. Poor Behavior

(The following behaviors contrast those of a model courteous bridge player with the actions of players exhibiting poor manners, rude and intimidating behavior up to behavior requiring disciplinary action under ACBL's Zero Tolerance program.)

Personal Behavior

- **Always use a respectful tone of voice when speaking with partner and opponents. Carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game. Never make gratuitous comments during or after the bidding or play. Gratuitous analyses, smug, loud or disruptive comments directed toward anyone are not tolerated. Badgering and/or intimidating the opponents, profanity and threats of violence are strictly prohibited behaviors. These actions are grounds for zero tolerance discipline.**
- **Do not complain.....about anything – the cards, the opponents, partner, the director, the human-dealt hands, the computer-dealt hands, the fixes, the bad breaks, etc. You are reducing the enjoyment factor of the game for everyone at the table.**
- **When calling the director, first mention to the other players at the table that you are going to check with the director so as not to alarm them with a sudden and unexpected loud voice. Raise your hand and clearly speak in the direction of a director, "director, please!" in a friendly tone of voice. It is rude to scream "Director!!" (And worse to scream "Director!!" several times in rapid fire succession not giving the director an opportunity to acknowledge you) without first alerting the others at the table and not using the word "please." Please leave your hand up until the director acknowledges you. Always speak to the director in a respectful tone of voice.**
- **Compliment the opponents and partner when they have made a nice bid or play. Do not compliment partner on a nice bid or play when it is clear an opponent made the error. Worse yet, do not point out to the opponents that their poor play enabled you to receive a good result. Never gloat. Examples of gloating: "At least we weren't doubled.," "They could have made a game."**
- **Ask, "What are your lead agreements?" "What are your carding agreements?" or "What are your discarding agreements?" Ask if you may look at your opponents convention card; don't just grab it. Never ask what a specific card means when an opponent leads, discards or follows suit. This is an apparent attempt to get your opponent to interpret the meaning of the card which is your responsibility. When asked about your carding, always respond by telling the opponents what your agreements are, not what the card means.**
- **Always remain at the table until the next round has been called except to go to the restroom, the refreshment area or designated smoke area. Leaving the table needlessly before the round ends is rude.**
- **Mentor a new player!**

Table Protocol

- As the north/south pair, always welcome the people arriving at your table with a smile and a friendly "hello." As the east/west pair, always greet your new opponents with a smile and a friendly "hello." Introduce yourselves if you are unfamiliar with your opponents' names.
- Each player at the table is allowed one corner of the table for their use. This is the corner to your right. *Use only your corner of the table. Do not use the left corner depriving your left-hand opponent of his/her space. This includes your convention card and your drink. Do not move your bid box toward the center of the table hindering your RHO's visibility.*
- Have two clearly completed convention cards readily available to the opponents. This is a regulation, not just a nicety.
- When placing the bid cards on the table, properly use the space assigned to you. Imagine the table card is just as wide as it is long. Line your bids up with this imaginary square aligning your first bid with the left side of the square and keeping your final bid inside the right side of the square.
- North has responsibilities at the table. A courteous, well-mannered north will always do the following.
 1. Make sure the boards are in order.
 2. When on lead, to avoid slow play, always lead before entering the contract into the Bridgmate and writing on your private score sheet.
 3. When a hand is complete, always put the new board on top so the others at the table can pull their cards in preparation for the next hand while you are recording the result. *Writing/recording first causes slow play.*
 4. Complete the Bridgmate scoring entry and offer the Bridgmate to east/west for confirmation. *(Others at the table should give North a chance to complete scoring a hand before starting the next auction.)*
 5. Ask the player at the adjacent table where they would like to receive the boards. Place the boards in the correct order and direction and pass them in a friendly manner by quietly placing them in the agreed-upon location. *Passing the boards out of order and/or nudging a player at the next table during play constitutes poor manners.*
- Leave a tidy playing area. Discard unwanted cups, candy wrappers, tissues, trash, etc. in a garbage can. *Do not leave these items on the playing table, the small table next to your chair or discard them on the floor.*

Bidding and Card Play Protocol

- **Always bid in tempo.** A break in tempo may give your partner a nonverbal cue (s)he is not entitled to. **Bidding in tempo always guarantees your partner will be able to defend their actions since there will be no break in tempo for the opponents to claim unauthorized information.**
- **Observe and play to all tricks in tempo.** *Do not dwell on a trick. Partner may pick this up as an unauthorized cue.*
- **Bridge is a timed event. Keep up with the time limits.**
- **Always gaze down at your cards and the table during the bidding and play on defense.** *Do not look at your partner's face. It is unethical to give or pick up nonverbal cues from partner. It is unethical to look to partner for approval of a bid or play. Looking at another player's hand for the purpose of seeing their cards or for the purpose of observing the place from which a player draws cards is unethical.*
- **Always place the bid cards and the playing cards on the table with a soft touch.** *Snapping cards, throwing cards or tossing cards is discourteous. Making bids by banging them on the table or playing cards by snapping them may send a message of unauthorized information to partner. This is unethical. Indicating the expectation of winning or losing a trick that has not been completed is unethical. Detaching a card before it is your turn to play is discourteous and may send unauthorized information to partner.*
- *It is unethical to call attention to a significant occurrence or to the number of tricks still required for success or defeat of a contract. It is also unethical to show an obvious lack of interest in a deal.*
- **It is fair to ask the opponents about the meaning of their bidding. This should be done in an ethical manner for your benefit only.** *It is unethical to ask questions about the bidding that may send a message of unauthorized information to partner. Always ask when it is your turn to bid or lead. It is good policy to ask about the meaning of the bidding after the final pass unless you need to know earlier.*
- **A player is obligated to choose a call before touching any card in the bid box. Deliberation while touching the bidding box may subject the offending side to the adjustment provisions of Law 16. A call is considered made when a bidding box card has been taken out of the box with apparent intent.** *Until the card has been completely removed from the box, the director will treat the situation as unauthorized information. Alternating between a bid and a pass, a bid and a double or a pass and a double sends an obvious message to partner. Don't do it. A call may be changed without penalty, under the provisions of Law 25, only if a player has inadvertently taken out the wrong bidding box card, and the player corrects, or attempts to correct, without pause for thought, and partner has not subsequently called.*
- **Always secure agreement on the final result before mixing your cards together and placing them back in the board.**

- **Always claim by clearly stating your line of play when you are certain you have the remainder of the tricks.** *Prolonging play unnecessarily may have the appearance of attempting to disconcert an opponent. On the other hand, experienced players should refrain from belittling less experienced players who fail to make an obvious claim, e.g. "Is there a reason to continue?"* **When you make a claim, you must table your cards so everyone can see them and confirm the claim. Tabling your cards means placing them on the table.**
- **When partner makes a bid that is to be alerted, speak "alert" while visibly touching the alert card to the table where both opponents can see it. Not only is this proper procedure, we owe this courtesy to everyone at the table.**
- **Players should protect their rights and the opponent's rights by announcing, prior to making any bid that skips one or more levels of bidding. This is done by placing the stop card on the table where LHO can see it (the skip bidder is responsible for gaining LHO's attention). The bid should be made and the stop card should be replaced in the bid box. LHO should wait 10 seconds following the placement of your call on the table before choosing a call from their box regardless of the stop card being picked up immediately or left on the table.** *Not waiting the appropriate amount of time may send unauthorized information to partner. The director may adjust the result if there was a logical alternative to partner's subsequent action. You owe it to partner to follow this protocol. This is a regulation, not just a nicety.*

ACBL Zero Tolerance Policy

The ACBL is committed to improving acceptable player behavior at all times at all ACBL events.

The ultimate purpose of the Zero-Tolerance policy is to create a much more pleasant atmosphere at ACBL-sponsored events. These behaviors are grounds for zero-tolerance discipline.

- *Badgering, rudeness, insinuations, intimidation, profanity, threats or violence.*
- *Negative comments concerning opponents' or partner's play or bidding.*
- *Constant and gratuitous lessons and analyses at the table.*
- *Loud and disruptive arguing with a director's ruling.*

WHAT IS THE PROPER WAY TO REPORT AN OBSERVED ZERO TOLERANCE VIOLATION OR OTHER BEHAVIOR AT THE TABLE THAT YOU BELIEVE SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED ON A RECURRING BASIS? First, ask nicely for the behavior to be ceased. If doing so is ineffective, or if you are unwilling to do so, call the director and report the behavior. *Waiting to report bad behavior privately is always an option, but is the least likely action to achieve the desired behavior modification.*

Slow Play

Thoughtful bidding and play are expected parts of the game and are generally NOT the reasons for slow play. The real reasons are:

- **DISCUSSING THE HANDS ANYTIME DURING THE GAME.**
Discuss only agreement clarification during the game. All discussion of the hands whether bidding, declarer play or defensive play should be done after the game. *Hands should never be discussed between hands or between rounds. Hand discussion is the #1 reason for slow play.*
 - ⁽¹⁾ **RECORDING THE CONTRACT WHEN YOU ARE FIRST TO LEAD.** When you are the opening leader, make your lead first, THEN record the contract while everyone else is planning their play. *This way the other players will not have to wait while you record the contract. You are personally responsible for slow play if you write on your private score or do anything (but think of course!) before making the opening lead. Writing anything instead of playing is the #2 reason for slow play.*
 - **WRITING ON YOUR PRIVATE SCORE DURING THE AUCTION.**
Always attend to the auction. *Do not write on your private score card during the auction. The #2 reason for slow play.*
 - **ENTERING THE CONTRACT INTO THE BRIDGEMATE WHEN YOU ARE ON LEAD.** Always lead before entering the contract. *Again, the #2 reason for slow play.*
 - **WRITING ON YOUR PRIVATE SCORE BEFORE PLACING DUMMY ON THE TABLE.** Always place the dummy on the table following the lead, THEN record the contract. *Again the #2 reason for slow play is writing when you should be playing bridge. If you are declarer or partner of the opening leader, record the contract immediately while the opening lead is being made and the dummy is being placed on the table. Then you will be ready to play without further interruption.*
 - **COMPLAINING.** Do not complain.....about anything – the cards, the opponents, partner, the director, the human-dealt hands, the computer-dealt hands, the fixes, the bad breaks, etc. *You are slowing the game and reducing the enjoyment factor of the game for everyone at the table. This is the #3 reason for slow play.*
- (1) A popular misconception is that the mind can be thinking of one thing while doing something else (i.e. writing the contract while thinking what to lead).
"Your brain can handle many thoughts with incredible speed, but only one at a time. The speed with which thoughts come one after the other creates the illusion that you can think of many things at once. You can't." Victor Tantaló – human development trainer.

This summary of bridge manners, etiquette and conduct was created by David Zapatka, Unit #351.