

Better Behaviour Topics

A Better Behaviour campaign was launched in 2014, in an attempt to make our members aware of their obligations to themselves and other players,

This was the original poster:

Better Behaviour at Bridge			
Unacceptable		Encouraged	
BULLYING	all forms of intimidation; loud and aggressive behaviour; summoning the TD in an unpleasant manner; hectoring less experienced players; imposing rulings without consulting the TD or the Laws	BE KIND	to opponents, partner, the TD... everybody
RUDENESS	ignoring opponents; arguing with them, the TD or partner; using insulting or offensive language	REPORT	unacceptable behaviour at the time, not later – we must take a firm stand to stamp it out
IMPATIENCE	indicating annoyance when an opponent (or partner) takes time for thought; demanding attention from the TD when he is otherwise engaged	INTRODUCE	yourself to others, and new players to your club and our events
DILLY-DALLYING	arriving late at the table; time-wasting between and during deals	DO YOUR BIT	to assist in the smooth running of events
GRATUITOUS REMARKS	comments on partner's shortcomings, opponents' ignorance, TD decisions, unfair point distribution.....	GIVE	something back to the game we all love
EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS	nobody enjoys these! Bite your tongue and count to ten.	ENJOY	your bridge and others will enjoy playing with and against you

Cathy Ferguson produces a Be Nice poster for clubs to display on their notice board

A series of monthly topics ran out of steam two years later. We have divided them into groups:

- 1** *General*
- 2** *Practice at the Table*
- 3** *Active Ethics*
- 4** *Familiarity with the Laws*

1 General

Let's Do Better

Law 74 – Conduct and etiquette

A2 *A player should carefully avoid any remark or extraneous action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game.*

Players often complain about bad behaviour at the table.

It is difficult for the powers that be to take any action after the event – both sides must be heard and the facts are difficult to establish.

We need everybody to co-operate in a two-pronged attack on unpleasantness:

Let us all make an effort not to interfere with others' enjoyment of the game:

- **Be quiet** – no shouting at partner/opponents, no yelling for the Director
- **Be calm** – no emotional outbursts
- **Be considerate** – bad language and cutting remarks may upset opponents even when they are directed at partner
- **Be nice** – if an opponent is clearly upset an apology may help, even if you feel you have done nothing wrong

Let us all make an effort to be more tolerant of the foibles of others

- If someone has annoying habits try to explain that these upset you before you actually become upset – they may not realise that their behaviour is upsetting
- If you are a more experienced player try to avoid patronising your opponents
- Do not assume that opponents are trying to mislead you. If you are dissatisfied with an explanation ask for clarification – but not in such a way as to appear to accuse them of dishonesty
- Remember – no-one is 'right' in these situations. You cannot excuse your own bad behaviour by citing bad behaviour from someone else.

Bad Mouthing is Bad

'Hanlon's' Razor' is a saying distantly related to Murphy's Law

“Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity”

(Not to suggest that bridge players are stupid – they are of course a highly intelligent set of people – but they may act in ignorance. Please try to educate rather than to condemn.)

Think carefully before accusing another player of behaviour you would be ashamed of.

We came across this item in the Editorial of the August 1956 *Bridge Magazine*

“The Rules and Ethics Committee of the English Bridge Union has issued the following memorandum:

The Committee deploras the practice of some players who detect some seeming irregularity or violation of a law or propriety and, though failing to report it officially, discuss it openly with other contestants. In many cases the alleged offence has either never taken place at all, or in the subsequent discussion becomes distorted or exaggerated. If there is a case of irregular play, or alleged private understanding, players should report it. Failing that, it is not proper to discuss it at all.”

Please think very carefully before spreading rumours.

Careless talk causes unnecessary ill-feeling.

Let us try not to say anything we might later regret.

Be Nice to the Tournament Director

Without a Tournament Director there can be no tournament.

Try not to take the TD for granted!

TDs will ensure that the tournament runs smoothly and resolve any issues that arise at the table.

But they are human like the rest of us and will appreciate your co-operation.

You should call the Director whenever you have a problem, but remember:

Be Courteous call the director politely, in a tone that will not upset your opponents

Be Patient when you call he may be involved elsewhere
do not demand instant attention.

Be Aware familiarise yourself with the basic movements
check that you have the correct boards and the correct opponents

Be Helpful Offer to assist with setting up and clearing up
Pass the boards to the next table. Do not leave them on the floor.

Be Tidy Clear away crockery, glasses and litter

Be Grateful It costs nothing to thank the workers

Are We Doing Better?

Law 74 – Conduct and etiquette

A2 *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.*

“There has been a lot of correspondence recently complaining about bad behaviour at the table.....”

(from the April 2014 Monthly Memo)

It is disappointing to report that there is still a lot of correspondence complaining about bad behaviour at the table.

Please, please, try to be **considerate** of others’ feelings, and **tolerant** of their weaknesses.

Consideration:

- ♠ One person’s witty remark may be another person’s hurtful slight.
- ♠ One person’s normal vocabulary of expletives may be offensive.
- ♠ One person’s expression of irritation at the shortcomings of the organisation, the TD, partner, opponents, life in general, can be very upsetting.
- ♠ Emotion is normal in a competitive sport. Do not let it take over.
- ♠ Should you fall short of perfection PLEASE offer an apology. This is not an admission of guilt, just an acknowledgment that you may inadvertently have upset someone.

Tolerance

- ♥ Your standards of behaviour are high, but others are human and may fall short.
(Could some pedantic individual even find something to criticise in your own behaviour?)
When someone upsets you explain nicely why you are upset.
If they apologise let that end the matter.
- ♥ Give others the benefit of the doubt.
There is rarely anything personal in an apparent lack of courtesy.
Why not assume they are having a bad day?
- ♥ Try not to get involved in a tit for tat argument.
Bad behaviour is bad behaviour, no matter what someone else may have done.

2 Practice at the table

The Board

Law 7A: *When a Board is to be played it is placed in the centre of the table where it shall remain, correctly oriented, till play is completed.*

Quite simple really – do **not** remove the Board from the table, do **not** move it to the side so that it cannot be seen, do **not** put it under your bidding box, do **not** turn it through 90°.

Just leave it in the centre of the table!

(It is all right to move it a short distance to accommodate dummy, but it **MUST** stay where it can be clearly seen by all 4 players, with the compass signs pointing towards the correct players.)

The aim is to cut down the risk of someone returning a hand to the wrong slot, creating extra work for the scorer, or making it impossible for the board to be scored, and so spoiling the tournament.

Also, players are entitled to check the vulnerability and dealer during the course of play.

Associated Recommendation:

Place just one board on the table at a time.

This makes it easier to score, and stops the unfortunate confusion when one player takes a hand from one board and the other three players take their hands from another..... you think that never happens?

How do you Play your Cards?

Law 45A: *Play of a Card from a Hand*

Each player except dummy plays a card by detaching it from his hand and facing it on the table immediately in front of him.

Simple enough – but an area where many players have acquired mannerisms which some might find irritating.

For example: cracking the card so that the play is not silent
 keeping hold of the card and turning it over too soon
 looking for marks for artistic impression by playing with some kind of flourish
 removing a card from hand and admiring it for some time before either playing it, or returning it to hand

Law 44 *Sequence and procedure of play*

44B Subsequent Plays to a Trick

*After the lead, each other player **in turn** plays a card...*

We should never play out of turn – and that includes declarer's call of a card from dummy.

Law 74 – Conduct and etiquette

B2 *As a matter of courtesy a player should refrain from detaching a card before it is his turn to play*

This goes beyond irritation:

 an inexperienced player may find it intimidating
 it might be construed as giving Unauthorized Information to partner

Perhaps you know someone who could do better in playing his cards.....could it be you?

The Bidding Box

Hands Off the Bidding Box

The Bidding Box is a great invention: it makes it easy to remember the auction and avoids all accusations of verbal inflection that might carry Unauthorised information.

But it has produced another way to convey Unauthorised Information:

DO NOT FIDDLE WITH THE BIDS IN YOUR BOX!

Decide which call you wish to make and reach for the Box ***only after making your decision.***

The only time you should touch the Box is to grasp the call you have decided to make. Once you take hold of a bidding card it is too late to change your mind.

This does **NOT** mean that once a call has been removed from the Box it cannot be changed.

You **may not** change your mind about a call. You **must** make the call you intended to make.

If you make a mechanical error – you inadvertently pull the wrong card, or another card has stuck to the one you intended to make – you **should** change to the bid you intended to make ***as soon as you notice your error.*** Put the Bidding Cards back and try again. Do this even if it is partner's alert that draws your attention to the mistake.

You should change a mechanical error even if the next player has also made a call. His call is retracted. He can do whatever he likes without penalty, and any information gained by his partner is Authorised.

If you do not notice your error until after partner has called it is too late. You are stuck with your mechanical error and must muddle through.

The Laws of Contract Bridge do not yet cover Bidding Boxes.

There are special Regulations about the use of the Bidding Box: they can be found on the SBU website: www.sbu.org.uk

Click on **Admin.**

From the Drop Down Menu click on **Laws and Ethics**

From the next Drop Down Menu select **Bidding Box Regulations**

Alert Clearly

Has anyone ever said 'I did not see the Alert' at your table?

Did you think he might be trying to excuse a bad bid or play?

Make a decision to-day that this will never happen again: vow to alert in such a way that your Alert Card cannot be missed!

- ♥ Do not be afraid of looking flashy.
- ♥ Do not flick at the card, leaving it in the box
- ♥ Do not lift it up a couple of inches then drop it
- ♥ Do not wave your hand about airily

Take the Alert Card out of the box and place it in the middle of the table

Alerting procedure is covered in the Laws and Ethics article imaginatively entitled: "SBU Alerting Procedure"

Most of the document is devoted to explaining when to alert and when not to. Dry reading perhaps, but if you scroll down to the final paragraph you will find this key information:

7 Alerting Procedure

1. Alerts are compulsory – you may not ask opponents not to alert. The requirement to alert applies even though the convention or other agreement is listed on the convention card.
2. Alert partner's calls, **not your own** (except when screens are in use). Alerts should be made immediately after the alertable call has been completed.
3. Alerts are made by displaying the Alert card. **It is the alerter's responsibility to ensure that both opponents have seen his alert.** If bidding boxes are not in use the alert is made audibly by saying: "Alert".

Respect the Stop Card

Not everybody is a fan of the Stop Card.

Why slow down play unnecessarily when it goes 1NT Pass 3NT and you have no intention of calling?

Alas, it is not possible to draft a regulation that differentiates between a pre-emptive call, designed to give the next player a problem, and a full value leap to game.

The Stop Card is a blessing when you do have a problem: it gives you time to think without putting partner under ethical pressure.

Be grateful that it exists when you do have a problem; and respect it when you do not.

- ♣ Always play the Stop Card before making a jump bid
- ♣ Always pause when RHO plays the Stop Card

The Laws of Bridge do not yet cover the use of the Bidding Box, but there are **Regulations:**

§6 Before making a jump bid (i.e. a bid at a higher level than the minimum required) a player **must** place the Stop card in front of him, then place his call as usual, and eventually remove the Stop card. His LHO (left-hand opponent) should not call until the Stop card has been removed. The Stop card should be left on the table for about ten seconds, to give the next player time to reflect. It should not be removed prematurely.

§7 After a jump bid, the next player **must** pause for about ten seconds before calling. ***It is an offence either not to pause or to show indifference when pausing.*** If the Stop card has been removed prematurely or has not been used an opponent should pause as though the Stop card had been used correctly.

(SBU Bidding Box Regulations, 2009)

You can find these Regulations, along with other important documents, on the SBU website. Go to Admin on the home page and point to Laws and Ethics on the drop down menu. Select L& E Articles, then L&E Policies, Docs, Referees

Bidding Box Etiquette

“The Danger Hand is the one nearest the Bidding Box.”

Look elsewhere for tips on choosing the best call: this article examines the mechanics of using the Bidding Box.

Some **DON'Ts**

- 1 Do Not Fiddle.** It is not easy for a human being to sit absolutely still while thinking. But you should not reduce tension by playing with the Bidding Box – it may be possible to see which calls you are considering and that is Unauthorised Information which will put partner under ethical pressure. **DO NOT TOUCH** the Bidding Box until you have decided which call to make.
- 2 Do Not Call Out of Turn.** Even touching a bidding card before your turn to call may put partner under pressure. **BE PATIENT.**
- 3 Do Not Remove the Stop and Alert Cards.** They belong in the Box. If you keep them there they will not get lost!

Some **DOs**:

- 1 Make the Call you Intended to Make.** If you pull the wrong bidding card, or some cards get stuck together, or you are just dozy and pull out 2 when you meant to bid 1 – you should change your call. It does not matter how your mechanical error is drawn to your attention – perhaps partner alerts, or an opponent asks a question, or you simply look down and see your call is not the one you intended – change it, provided you notice your error before partner has called. (This does NOT mean that you can re-think and decide that another call would be better. It does mean that you are not stuck with a call that you did not intend to make.) If Left Hand Opponent has already called that call is cancelled and can be changed to any legal call without any penalty. Once partner bids you are stuck and must try to muddle through.
- 2 Alert promptly and clearly.** It is your responsibility to ensure that opponents have seen your Alert Card. If you flick it with a casual finger or lift it half-way out of the box then drop it, an opponent may not notice and can legitimately claim damage. Good practice is to remove the Alert Card from the Box and place it in the middle of the table, on the board for all to see. As an opponent you should acknowledge that you have seen it before it is returned to the Box.
- 3 Respect the Stop Card.** Before making a jump bid place the Stop Card on the table. Make your bid, wait 10 seconds, then remove the Stop Card. As LHO you should not touch the Bidding Box till the Stop Card is removed. If it is removed prematurely you should still take 10 seconds whether you have something to think about or not. The Stop Card was brought in to help with possible hesitation situations after a pre-emptive bid. The idea is to give LHO time to think without making it obvious whether or not there is a problem. It is important not to bid quickly, or to look bored while pausing, or to take much longer than the recommended 10 seconds – again, failing to follow proper procedure can give partner ethical problems. It is a bit of a blunt sword, in that a 1NT – Pass – 3NT auction is unlikely to give a problem. You may use some discretion!

The SBU Bidding Box Regulations, along with many other fascinating documents, can be found on the website: www.sbu.org.uk Under ADMIN select Laws and Ethics from the drop-down menu.

Electronic Scorepads

The Bridgemate and its offshoots are a godsend to scorers who no longer need to transfer data into a computer by hand. One less opportunity for error!

But it has not removed human error altogether – Tournament Directors agree that the most frequent reason for a call to the table these days is scoring error: the score has been entered under the wrong board number, or to the wrong declarer, or a double has been omitted, or....

Unfortunately such errors are not always picked up at the time and can lead to wrong results being published.

How to minimise errors

Best practice for North (or whoever is in charge of the electronic scoring device)*

- 1) As soon as the board is placed on the table enter its number
- 2) As soon as the contract is known enter the contract and declarer
- 3) As soon as the opening lead is made, enter that (if required)
- 4) At the end of play agree the number of tricks before entering that
- 5) After pressing OK show opponents the verification screen

Best practice for East (or whichever partner volunteers to check the score)**

- 1) Check Board number, contract, declarer and number of tricks
- 2) Do not press Accept, Confirm or OK until you are satisfied that the data is correct
- 3) Where a percentage score appears on the screen allow the other players to see it, but do not announce it out loud for all to hear

If, in spite of your best efforts, incorrect data has been accepted:

Call the TD and explain what has happened.

He will erase the incorrect information and allow you to enter the correct information.

He will confirm that your opponents agree with the amended data.

(A Playing Director he may have other demands on his time. He may depute the duty of erasing the wrong information to another player or may supply you with a correction slip so that he can make the score correction later.)

Whatever, all changes to data must be recorded by the TD or his deputy.

No unauthorised changes shall be made.

In the event that a result has been entered under the wrong board number, and data for an unplayed board has been seen so that the board cannot be played, both sides are held to be responsible, and both will normally receive average minus on the board.

*Entering the data as it becomes available speeds up scoring at the end of play.

(No need to try to remember the opening lead!)

**Better to correct an error at this stage than to cause trouble by getting it changed later.

Most players want to see their percentage score when it is available. After pressing Accept it is polite to ensure that everybody else has a chance to see the score if they wish.

Try not to say anything about the scores that might be overheard, creating an Unauthorised Information situation at a neighbouring table.

Dummy's Dos and Don'ts

Dummy is declarer's partner. He becomes dummy when the opening lead is faced.

(Laws of Duplicate Bridge 2017, Definitions)

After the auction is concluded, and before the opening lead is made, the future dummy

should (if asked), **give** a complete review of the auction

answer questions about the calls made

correct any misexplanations given by partner during the auction.

For example, you might say: 'partner should (not) have alerted my call'

After the opening lead is faced, dummy spreads his hand in front of him on the table, face up, sorted into suits, the cards in order of rank with the lowest ranking cards towards declarer, and in separate columns pointing lengthwise towards declarer. Trumps are placed to dummy's right.

(Law 41D)

Declarer plays a card from dummy by naming the card, after which dummy picks up the card and faces it on the table.

(Law 45B)

DO play the nominated card clearly: pick it up, place it apart from the other cards

DO NOT play a card that declarer has not nominated

look at other players' cards

'Dummy must not participate in the play, nor may he communicate anything about the play to declarer.'

(Law 43A1c)

DO try to prevent an irregularity, such as a lead out of turn.

tell partner he has placed a played card wrongly – 'we won that trick, partner'

try to prevent partner from revoking – 'having no peaches, partner?'

DO NOT draw attention to an irregularity after it has happened

If someone has led out of turn say nothing – only an active player can object

If you think a defender has revoked: say nothing till the end of play

Never call the director on your own initiative

3 Active Ethics

Full and Frank Disclosure

How much should you tell opponents about your methods?

As much as you can.

Imagine they were present when you and partner discussed your system – they are entitled to know all your agreements and any inferences you can draw from partnership experience.

Please make an effort to be as helpful as possible.

What opponents are **not** entitled to know is which cards you actually hold.

Say partner leads a king against a suit contract. Declarer asks about your carding. State your agreements – perhaps ‘could be from AK or KQ, asks for a count signal’.

If you know from your own hand that he has actually led from Kx – dummy has AJx and you are looking at Q109x – you should not make any extra comment.

Everybody knows that Kx is a possibility: by mentioning it you may give Unauthorised Information to partner.

Describe your agreements, not what you know from your own hand.

If you are unsure of the meaning of partner’s bid – admit that.

‘Undiscussed’ may be true, but if you have an inkling based on partner’s actions in similar situations you should say so.

What you **must not do** is say ‘I am taking it as...’ That is Unauthorised Information.

As a corollary, an opponent **may not ask** : ‘What do you take it as?’

Please Ask Nicely!

Many players are intimidated by **aggressive questioning**.

Inexperienced players are particularly vulnerable: they may not understand the question or know what kind of answer is expected.

You are entitled to know opponents' partnership agreements:

"During the auction and before the final call, any player may request, at his own turn to call, an explanation of the opponents' auction. He is entitled to know about calls actually made, about relevant alternative calls available that were not made, and about inferences from the choice of action where there are matters of partnership understanding."

"After the final pass and throughout the play period, either defender at his own turn to play may request an explanation of the opposing auction. At his turn to play from his hand or from dummy, declarer may request an explanation of a defender's call or card play understandings."

Law 20F: Explanation of calls

Such questions are answered by the partner of the player who made the call or play, as fully and helpfully as possible

What is important is the manner in which the question is posed:

Do NOT

Adopt a 'Bad Cop' line of questioning.

Put words into opponent's mouth: "Is that Drury?"

Repeat the same question in a louder voice.

Insist on an explanation when told 'we have no agreement'.

Ask 'what are you taking this as?'

If your opponent genuinely does not know what a bid means bullying will not help!

DO Remain polite at all times

Ask clearly: if your original question is met with a blank expression try to clarify.

Make sure you have fully understood the reply to your question: follow up if necessary.

Be Nice!

Misexplanations

What should you do when an opponent asks partner what your bid means; and partner is either lost for words, or produces an explanation that does not describe what you hold?

One thing you must **not** do is to reveal that there is a problem with a gasp, frown, or comment. Difficult though it may be, you must try to maintain a poker face

Another thing you must **not** do is to take advantage of partner's explanation.

Law 75A: Mistake Causing Unauthorized Explanation

Irrespective of whether or not an explanation is a correct statement of partnership agreement, a player, having heard his partner's explanation, knows that his own call has been misinterpreted.

This knowledge is Unauthorised Information and the player must carefully avoid taking any advantage from it; otherwise the Director shall award an adjusted score.

Try to continue the auction as if you had not heard what partner has said.

There are three possible scenarios:

- 1 Partner has given the correct explanation; you have forgotten your agreements. In this case there is no infraction of Law – you have inadvertently made a psychic bid. Do your best to continue the auction as if you had not been reminded. (A suggestion that you remembered all by yourself will not receive much sympathy.) You must not explain your error during the auction; and need not do so when the auction is complete, though as declarer/dummy you may do so. (A Tournament Director will assume Mistaken Explanation unless you can clearly demonstrate, by reference to your Convention Card, that the explanation is correct.)
- 2 Partner has given the wrong explanation of your methods. A Mistaken Explanation is an infraction of Law; if opponents are damaged the score will be adjusted. At the end of the auction, if you become declarer or dummy, you must correct the wrong explanation before the opening lead is made. (Note that a defender should never correct a misexplanation until the hand has been played out.) If partner realises he has made a mistake he should correct his error immediately, even during the auction.
- 3 You do not know whether partner's explanation is correct or not. Do your best to soldier on as if no explanation had been asked or offered. At the end of the auction, if you become declarer or dummy, you may clarify the situation for opponents.

NOTE 1: An alert of a natural bid, or failure to alert a conventional one is a misexplanation. Make no comment. Assume partner has made a mistake in alerting or forgotten to alert when he should have done and continue the auction.

NOTE 2: If you are on the receiving end you do not automatically receive an adjusted score. You must demonstrate that you have been damaged by the misexplanation.

Psyches

A psychic bid is a **gross deviation from normal system**, such as opening 1♠ with a doubleton spade, or 1NT with a void. It is a permissible tactic, **provided that** the bid is as much a surprise to partner as it is to the opponents.

There should be no such thing as a 'safe' psyche.

Some players get a buzz from psyching; as a rule their opponents do not share their enthusiasm.

The more frequently you psyche the more ethical strain you put on partner, who should lean over backwards to avoid 'fielding' your psyche – to bid in such a way as to cater for the possibility that your call is not genuine.

Law 40C: Deviation from System and Psychic Action

1. *A player may deviate from his side's announced understandings provided that his partner has no more reason than the opponents to be aware of the deviation. Repeated deviations lead to implicit understandings which then form part of the partnership's methods and must be disclosed in accordance with the regulations governing disclosure of system.*

Light openers in third seat are classed as psyches: **if you frequently open light put that information on your Convention Card, and use your Alert Card.**

SBU Systems Policy

2.4.3 Where a suspicion arises that a psychic bid has been 'fielded' (partner has taken an unusual action that might suggest the psyche was not unexpected) the incident should be reported immediately. If the Tournament Director considers the case proven he will assign an adjusted score and may impose a procedural penalty.

Remember: a successful psyche will detract from your opponents' enjoyment of the game, so we implore you:

Do not psyche against inexperienced players.

Do not psyche in the later stages of an event where you are not doing well. Your actions will produce random results that may affect the outcome and will leave some players in contention feeling aggrieved.

The SBU is unable to record every psyche at all its events, but psyches should nonetheless be reported in case a pattern can be established.

Psychic Strong 2s

The SBU Standard System File defines a 2♣ opener as “an artificial strength-showing bid that promises 23+HCP if balanced; or, if unbalanced, a hand too strong to allow partner to Pass in response.”

An alternative definition: “A hand with more Honour Tricks than Losers.”

Our attention has been brought to these hands where someone has opened 2♣.

a)	♠QT ♥AQJT985 ♦76 ♣AJ	14 HCP 7 Playing Tricks 6 losers 2 Honour Tricks	b)	♠A ♥AKQ87543 ♦42 ♣J8	14 HCP 9 Playing Tricks, 4 losers 3 Honour Tricks
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c)	♠AKQJ86543 ♥3 ♦9 ♣K6	13 HCP 9½ Playing Tricks 3 losers 2½ Honour Tricks			
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Promising certainly, but none comes close to a 2♣ opener.

One might argue that a 2♣ opener on these hands is a psyche – a gross distortion of strength. More likely it is a misjudgement, the result of inexperience or misunderstanding.

Players should beware of falling foul of the **SBU Systems Policy**:

2.4.4 Strong artificial opening bids.

The SBU has taken up its option under Law 40B(d) to restrict the use of psychic artificial calls. It is forbidden to psyche strong artificial opening bids that are forcing: e.g. an Acol strong 2♣ opener, or 1♣ in a Strong Club system. If a player psyches a strong artificial opening bid that is forcing this must be reported.

The **Systems Policy** offers the following guidelines for opening bids:

2.3.2 A **Strong (Acol) Two opener** in a suit is expected to conform to the **Rule of 25**: “HCP plus the lengths of the longest two suits is at least 25”.

Our examples do not even qualify as Acol 2s under these criteria.

$$a) = 14\text{HCP} + 7 + 2 = 21$$

$$b) = 14\text{HCP} + 8 + 2 = 24$$

$$c) = 13\text{ HCP} + 9 + 2 = 24$$

Acol 2s are out of favour nowadays, but Benjy Acol is still popular. We would remind you that the definition of an Acol Strong 2 is “**a hand of quality** with 8 playing tricks.” We suggest a minimum of two Honour tricks **outside your main suit** so that the hand is suitable for defence as well as offence.

Sometimes even a hand with more than 20 HCP does best to open a simple one bid rather than force to game with insufficient values. If you find yourself playing 1♣ that may well be high enough!

A question to ask is: how likely is it to go “All Pass” if I open at the one-level? If you have 16HCP or less you can be pretty certain that someone else will bid, giving you a chance to show extra playing strength on the second round.

5 Knowledge of the Laws

The 2017 Edition of the Laws of Contract Bridge

The World Bridge Federation has tasked itself with revising the Laws once every decade. The 2017 Edition came into force in Scotland on 1 September, 2017.

There are no major changes, the emphasis is on clarification, making it easier to apply the laws in a uniform and fair manner. Players should try to familiarise themselves with the Laws to a certain extent, so that, if necessary, they can find their way around them.

DO NOT try to memorise them!

If something happens that requires rectification you should call a Tournament Director (TD), make sure you have stated all the relevant facts, and listen carefully to the Ruling.

The TD will consult the Laws to make sure that he is applying the correct one.

If a TD is not available you may take advice from an experienced player, but always **consult the Laws** before making a decision.

To quote from the Introduction:

“The purpose of the Laws remains unchanged. They are designed to define correct procedure and to provide an adequate remedy for when something goes wrong. They are designed not to punish irregularities but rather to rectify situations where non-offenders may otherwise be damaged. Players should be ready to accept graciously any rectification, penalty, or ruling. “

The trend, begun in 2007, to give Tournament Directors more discretion in enforcing the Law has been continued and attempts have been made to clarify interpretations.”

As part of our Better Behaviour Campaign, we would like to endorse this approach.

An opponent who makes a mistake, such as a bid out of turn, or a revoke, feels foolish and embarrassed.

Better behaviour requires that you do not aggravate the situation by demanding rectification in a loud, gloating or aggressive manner.

You should not wish to profit from such an inadvertent error.

The Laws are there to ensure that you are not actually damaged; they aim to restore equity, not to give you a better score than you would otherwise obtain.

In the (unlikely?) event that you have made an error try not to compound it.

You make a bid out of turn – do not try to grab it back and replace it until opponents are fully aware of their options.

You revoke – call the Director to find out whether your revoke is established before taking further action.

Try not to comment on your error by giving out information that may complicate the Ruling. The TD is your friend, but if you make a relatively simple situation more complicated than it need be you will stretch that friendship to its limits.

In short, when something goes wrong: call the TD; make sure you have explained the situation accurately and completely; accept the Ruling graciously.

No Home-made Rulings

If playing in an SBU event with a non-playing Director please follow Law 9B(a)

“The director should be summoned at once when attention is drawn to an irregularity”

No matter how well you think you know the Laws, they are generally more complex than you might think – a ruling that applies in one situation need not also apply to a similar but slightly different one.

Home-made rulings may be half-baked!

Insisting that you know the Laws and enforcing them without consulting the Law Book or a Director may be construed as Bullying, particularly against inexperienced opponents.

In the Club, with a playing Director who may not yet have played the board, it is less straightforward.

You probably need a number of members capable of giving a ruling, any one of whom can act as the Director’s deputy.

Be sure always to **consult the Laws** – everybody has a responsibility to familiarise themselves with them and to follow them.

Claims

Another area where ill-feeling abounds:

Law 74B: Etiquette.

As a matter of courtesy, a player should refrain from... prolonging play unnecessarily (as in playing on although he knows that the rest of the tricks are surely his) for the purpose of disconcerting an opponent.

In other words, **do not** play on when you have the rest of the tricks, especially if opponents appear to be struggling with discards.

Many declarers, particularly less experienced players, fear to claim in case defenders argue. A more experienced player may be in a position to concede – in a friendly manner!

Make your claim clearly, stating an exact line of play if necessary:

Eg: 'dummy is high'

'drawing your last trump, then cashing the diamonds'

Face your cards and allow opponents to examine the situation.

As a defender you may think the claim is flawed.

In that case you must call the TD (or his deputy in a club where the TD is also playing) for arbitration.

You may **NOT** insist that declarer plays his cards in a specific order so that you make extra tricks – that is a decision for the TD

accept the concession of a trick that you cannot possibly win

Eg: declarer says 'I shall play winners, make your trump whenever you like'.

If you no longer have a trump you may **not** accept the trick

If the claim is disputed you should normally call the Tournament Director; but if all four players agree play may continue till the situation is clarified.

We should encourage players to claim: remember to **be nice** if you think the claim is flawed.

Unauthorized Information

The sort of situation that causes a lot of unnecessary ill-feeling.....

Law 73C ***Player receives Unauthorized Information from Partner***

When a player has available to him unauthorized information from his partner, such as from a remark, question, explanation, gesture, mannerism, undue emphasis, inflection, haste or hesitation, an unexpected alert or failure to alert, he must carefully avoid taking any advantage from the unauthorized information.

If you convey Unauthorized Information by any means you put partner under pressure. He must try to ignore the UI, but should not *“choose, from among logical alternatives, one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the extraneous information.”* (Law 16B)

We have all been in a UI situation (perhaps most commonly when partner has hesitated). It is a very difficult place to be.

So let us be sympathetic towards the player under ethical pressure:

Do not assume that he has taken advantage – give him the benefit of the doubt till proven otherwise.

Do not insist that your opponent ‘must pass’ (that is not the case!)

Do not get emotional – establish the fact of the hesitation nicely, then if you are unhappy, ask the Director for a ruling – always nicely!

Do not insist that when there has been an infraction an opponent must be punished. The aim of the Laws is to restore equity – if you have not been damaged you should not expect an adjusted score.

*“Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho’ they may gang a kennin’ wrang
To step aside is human:”* (Burns: Address to the Unco Guid)

Hesitations During Play

It is **not** unethical to think when you have a problem.

It **is** unethical to allow your play to be influenced by partner's hesitation.

An example:

Playing standard attitude signals (where a high card encourages a continuation) you lead a King.

Partner thinks for a long time before playing the three, and your King wins the trick. What problem could partner have? He probably has J32 or A32.

If he plays the three in tempo you are free to decide whether to risk continuing the suit, or to switch to avoid being the victim of a Bath Coup.

After the hesitation you no longer have that option: you should definitely switch.

It is unethical to hesitate with the deliberate intention of deceiving declarer.

Law 73 – Communication

D2. Variations in Tempo or Manner

A player may not attempt to mislead an opponent by means of a question, remark or gesture; by the haste or hesitancy of a call or play (as in hesitating before playing a singleton); by the manner in which a call or play is made or by any purposeful deviation from correct procedure.

An illustration:

Many years ago an Anonymous American Player was alleged to indulge in this sort of unethical behaviour. Declarer led a jack from KJ10 towards Axx in dummy, and the AAP, holding three small cards, squirmed with air of a man with a dilemma. Eventually he played low, and declarer ran the jack, winning the trick. At the end of the hand the AAP demanded to know why his partner had not taken the trick with his queen.

'I thought you had it' was the laconic reply from his highly ethical partner.

When is a Card Played not a Played Card?

There is often debate as to whether a card that has been seen is played or not. Under what circumstances can you change a card that you appear to have played?

Law 45: Card Played

A. Play of a Card from a Hand

"Each player except dummy plays a card by detaching it from his hand and facing it on the table in front of him."

Note: 'on the table' means played in such a way that everybody can see it!

45C. Card Deemed to be Played

1. *"A defender's card held so that it is possible for his partner to see its face is deemed to be played to the current trick."*

Note: If declarer or dummy can see the card that does not make it a played card.

A defender can show declarer his entire hand if he so chooses without any penalty.

2. *"Declarer is deemed to have played a card from his hand if it is:*

a) held face up, touching or nearly touching the table

b) maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played.

Note if declarer holds his cards in such a way that a defender can see them they are not considered to be played cards. There has to be intent to play the card.

If a card accidentally drops from declarer's hand it is not a played card.

Nor is it a Penalty Card – declarer cannot have a Penalty Card.

Defenders are entitled to take advantage of any knowledge obtained.

Does this help when declarer says. 'Oh, I did not mean to play that'? How should we react?

A Better Behaved player does not enjoy taking advantage of another's misfortune.

Do not appear gleeful; do not insist aggressively on your rights.

Should you allow declarer to take the card back?

You should do so if the play is an accidental mechanical error.

You may wish to do so if declarer has been distracted in some way or suffers from some physical problem that makes card selection difficult.

Some players wish to allow declarer to replace a wrongly played card rather than take advantage of another's error. That is going too far; we should adhere to the Laws.

A declarer who knows he has played the wrong card in error rather than by accident should refuse such kind offers. Playing the wrong card is just another error, put it down to experience! Do not attempt to change it, just apologise to partner and play on.

There are situations where the card cannot be a played card:

If declarer has already played another card to the trick he can pick up the second card without penalty, unless it is actually an attempt to lead to the next trick.

If declarer has revoked and realises his error in time he must follow suit, replacing the wrongly played card in his hand without penalty. (Later plays to the same trick can also be changed without penalty.) If RHO changes his card – say he has realised that he has revoked – declarer can also change his card.

