

TD NEWSLETTER 1

It has been suggested that I write an occasional newsletter about the laws, etiquette and correct procedure at the bridge table. The first thing to emphasise is that Kendal Bridge Club is very lucky to be a friendly club and we should all make every effort to maintain that. I hope that everyone sees calling the director as normal procedure when you need a bit of help. I have seen plenty of examples in other clubs where the director is not called and the players try to sort things out themselves; a situation that can lead to a lot of unpleasantness. So please do continue to call the director whenever there is a problem at the table.

The first topic I have been asked to write about is “questions during the auction”. It is easy to get into bad habits so here are a few suggestions as to correct procedure which should avoid any problems arising!

I would welcome feedback. Please let me know what you think of this newsletter and ideas for future topics. Also do feel free to contact me if you have any specific questions.

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ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIDDING

When can I ask a question about the bidding?

The EBU advice is to defer questions until you are about to make the opening lead or your partner's opening lead is face-down on the table.

What if I really need to know during the auction?

Then you can ask questions at your turn to call.

Some players ask whenever a call is alerted – is this ok?

NO. (The EBU don't put it quite that strongly). Best advice is “don't ask questions unless it affects your bidding”. For example, if you are planning to pass whatever the call means then don't ask any questions.

What is wrong with asking a question when I am simply curious about what a bid means?

If you show unusual interest in one or more calls of the auction, then this may give rise to unauthorised information to your partner. If your partner then makes a bid or a lead which might be suggested by your question then that causes a problem.

Can you give me an example?

You are East. South opens 1♠ and North bids 4♦. You ask what that bid means and are told that it shows a singleton or void and 4-card support in spades. You pass and South bids 6♠. Partner holds:

♠54
♥632
♦QJ109
♣QJ109

Partner chooses to lead ♦Q which is the only lead to defeat the contract. Declarer is unhappy about why West made that lead, so calls the TD. There are alternative leads that West could have made, e.g. ♣Q or ♠4. The law says that if the lead could have been suggested by the unauthorised information (i.e. the question about the 4♦ bid) the TD can adjust the score. Here the TD is likely to adjust to 6♠ making.

So it really is best not to ask questions during the auction if I can avoid it

Definitely – if you had not asked about the 4♦ bid, partner might just have found the killing lead.

When I do ask a question how should it be phrased?

It is best to ask a neutral question, such as “Can you explain the auction?” or “What does 4♦ mean?”. Don't say “Does that show diamonds?” since you might get an incomplete answer.

TIPS ABOUT ASKING QUESTIONS

1. **Don't ask during the auction.** Wait until you are about to make the opening lead or your partner's opening lead is face-down on the table.
2. **The exception is when it might affect your bidding.** Then ask at your turn.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIDDING

Can I volunteer an explanation of my bid that partner has alerted?

Except when announcements are required, explanations must not be given unless asked for. (At the end of the auction the declaring side may offer to explain the auction).

Can I just give the name of a convention?

NO. For example, LHO bids 1♦ and your partner bids 2NT (alerted by you). You are asked what that means. Do not say "it is unusual". Say something like "it shows at least 5-5 in the minors and it could be weak or strong".

But everyone knows what the unusual No Trump is

Not necessarily, and in any case other people might not play it the same way as you do.

What do I do if I am not sure what partner's bid means?

You must **never** say "I am going to take it as ...". You should admit that you don't really know and offer to call the TD.

What happens if my partner gives an incorrect explanation of my call?

Don't say anything during the auction.

When do I say something?

If you or your partner ends up as declarer, then you must tell the opposition before they make the opening lead. (It is best to offer to call the TD). If you end up defending, then you must not say anything until the end of play (otherwise it gives unauthorised information to your partner).

If partner does give an incorrect explanation, it might affect my bidding

Basically, you are obliged to carry on bidding as though your partner had given the correct explanation.

When do I put the bidding cards away?

The calls should remain in place until the opening lead has been faced and all explanations have been obtained.

TIPS ABOUT ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- 1. Don't give an explanation until asked.**
- 2. Don't simply give the name of the convention.** Give a simple explanation of your call or auction.
- 3. Don't say how you are going to take your partner's call.**