**How to talk like a bridge player**

Convince all the kibitzers you're a player by using slang only the experts understand.

**a moose:** a huge hand, typically with lots of high cards in all the suits. "I had a real moose."

**a dog:** a pitiful hand, the opposite of a moose. "That bidding sequence shows a real dog."

**walk the dog:** now this is very different. "To walk the dog" means to purposely underbid an excellent hand (usually with one very long suit) in the hopes of being doubled when you "take the push" (bid one more) later in the auction. If you're a really good dog-walker you score up game plus a doubled overtrick!

**swan:** a hand with 7-4-1-1 distribution. Ely Culbertson, in the 1920's, said that swans should declare with the seven-card suit as trump even if you have a 4-4 fit in your second suit.

**the hippopotamus contract:** 5 No Trump.

**the curse of Scotland:** the 9 of diamonds. You explain this one to me...

**cheese:** a reference to Swiss cheese: a hand with a lot of holes in it. "You opened that piece of cheese?"

**luck of the flop:** what comes down in dummy. Usually when dummy has done nothing but pass. "The success of a bid like this depends wholly on the luck of the flop."

**on the table:** One of the few things the dummy can say: means the lead is in dummy.

**stiff:** a singleton. "I had Queen-fourth, stiff King, three small, and King-Jack fifth" means your hand was Qxxx K xxx KJxxx. Obviously "stiff" derives from the fact that, like a dead person, the singleton must stiffly fall on the first round of the suit.

**tight:** used to describe a doubleton set of honors. "King-Jack tight," "Ace-King tight" means KJ or AK doubleton.

**bid what is in front of your nose**: look at your hand and see what is the most obvious feature, then choose the bid that will obviously convey this to partner.

**tap**: when on defense, to lead a suit that declarer is void in so as to reduce declarer's trumps. If you continually "tap" declarer every time you are on lead you are employing a "forcing defense."

**"4 by 3":** a hand with 4-3-3-3 distribution.

**flat:** a hand with no particular important distributional feature is "flat," typically a hand with 4-3-3-3 or 5-3-3-2 distribution.

**the death distribution:** A hand which has one long suit of six or seven cards but otherwise has no singleton (a hand with 7-2-2-2, for example) is known as the "death distribution" as pre-empting with these hands seems to result in worse penalties than other hands with identical length in the long suit.

**shape:** a hand with shape is one with interesting distribution, a singleton and/or two suits being common elements. The opposite of flat. "Sure you had a nine-count, but it was a shapely nine-count!"

**six-bagger, seven-bagger:** a suit of that length.

**fixed:** When an opponent you consider quite a bit worse than you takes a wild anti-percentage bid or play that happens to strike gold. Since their action will not be duplicated by anyone else in the room because it is so bad, if the lie of the cards happens to work for it, you get a bad score without doing anything wrong -- thus you are "fixed." Sample conversation after a session: "We got royally fixed by K. and G. on Board 6." "Oh yeah, what did they do to you this time?" "Well, K. opened 3 Clubs on us, can you believe it? With 4 spades on the side!!"

**telephone number:** a penalty in the four digits. "I went for a telephone number" means you got caught for minus 1100 or 1400.

**telephone number with area code:**  a really big penalty. "I went for a telephone number with area code" means you got caught for minus 2000 or more.

**striped-tail ape double:** the strategy of doubling opponents who are thinking about bidding slam while they are only at the 4 or 5 level, as to make game doubled is less than getting the slam bonus. This is called the striped-tail ape double because if the opponents are aware of this ploy they will REDOUBLE and you have to run like a striped-tail ape to your own suit!

**righty, lefty:**  your right-hand opponent and left-hand opponent. Useful in describing a bidding sequence: "then lefty bid 3 Spades." You sometimes see RHO and LHO used as abbreviations in print, and so some younger players have invented the slang CHO, or center-hand opponent (partner).

**quacks:** a hand which has lots of queens and jacks, or "quacks," is really not as good as its point count would indicate. "I decided not to make a slam try because I had too many quacks." Also a term used in discussing a certain restricted choice situation -- where you are playing a suit where all you are missing in top cards are the queen and the jack, you can say, "When you cash the king, a quack falls on your right; do you finesse now or go for the drop?" Here "quack" is short for a queen or a jack.

**duck:** nothing to do with a quack, "duck" is a verb in bridge. To "duck" a trick is to refuse to play one's only high card in the opponent's long suit for a round or two, with the purpose of cutting communications between the defenders, or in some other situations, improving declarer's own communications. It strikes me as a very funny term; the image I guess is of a very tall person ducking objects being thrown at them?

**crocodile coup:** a defensive brilliancy, usually near the end of a hand, where the first defender to play to the trick wins with a card greater than necessary to "swallow" his partner's remaining singleton honor. If you are cheap and refuse to play this unnecessarily high card, your partner will have to win the trick and is end-played. The crocodile coup is a strange-looking play for it appears you are intentionally "crashing" your partner's honor-card.

**insult cue-bid:** a convention by which if the opponents cue-bid your suit, you take revenge by cue-bidding their suit. example 1H - 1S - 2S - 3H

**pianisimo:** a music term meaning light and easy. A bridge term meaning easy to play. A hand that plays itself.

**not through the Iron Duke:** This is one of the first bridge expressions people learn, although I imagine it must go back to whist. It is used only in a joking way as a defensive play whereby you take great pleasure in covering a relatively low card declarer leads with the obvious intention of ruffing. You say, as you cover the 9, say, with your J, "Not through the Iron Duke!" and everyone laughs. Guaranteed!