



## **I Pulled the Wrong Card** by Bob Gruber

“I pulled the wrong card.” That’s a refrain you’ve probably heard at the bridge table. Maybe even uttered it yourself a time or two. It’s usually followed by an expressed desire to replace the “wrong card” with the “right card.”

Dutiful duplicate players will call the director and sometimes hear, “that’s a played card” and other times hear, “you can put that back, and put down the card you meant.” So, is there favoritism in the wind or is the director simply recognizing different circumstances? As a director, let me assure you it’s the latter.

First off, there’s a difference between pulling a wrong card from the bidding box and pulling a wrong card during the play of the hand. And during the play of the hand, it matters whether it was the declarer or one of the defenders who pulled a wrong card. But, taking things in order, let’s start with the bidding.

Law #

### Changes of Call (during the Bidding)

25

Law 25 deals with Changes of Call and is one of the Laws modified in the 2008 update to the law book. Unintended calls can be changed if done without pause for thought up until partner calls. Once partner has called, you can no longer change your call. If your left-hand opponent has called, he/she will be able to change that call without penalty.

The primary point here is that the call was truly unintended, a mechanical error, not a change of mind, which can occur when you suddenly remember you’re playing convention “x” or you notice a call you had previously missed. A secondary key is you change or attempt to change the call without pause for thought. Since a call by the next player is permitted, the lack of a pause is judged on when the misbidder noticed the unintended call. Finally, the misbidder does not need to make the intended call, but only indicate the present call was unintended. In fact, it’s best not to make the intended call. Instead, when the unintended call is noticed, say something like “that’s not what I intended,” politely call “Director,” and raise your hand as a visual guide for the Director. Only if the Director authorizes a change of call should you give your intended call. Otherwise, a call given prematurely may become unauthorized information.

In summary, you may change an incorrectly pulled bidding card if:

- Partner has not bid yet
- The call was truly unintended
- Upon recognizing the misbid, you immediately indicate that to the whole table
- The director concurs that the conditions permitting a change of call are present

### Played Card

45

Law 45 deals with whether a card is deemed played, or not, during the play of the hand. We’ll soon see declarer is given a little more leeway in retracting a card than defenders. This leeway is because exposure of one of declarer’s cards can only help the opponents. Given dummy’s restricted rights, it doesn’t help the declaring side. In addition, for declarer, playing a card from hand is different than playing a card from dummy. So, on with the explanations.



### Defender's Played Card

45C1

A defender's card is played when it is held in a position where it would be possible for the partner to see its face. The partner does not actually have to see it, nor does it have to be nearly horizontal, nor does it have to be nearly touching the table; what matters is whether the partner could have seen its face if looking directly at it. The Director makes his/her decision based on information provided by all four (4) players at the table. As a judgment call, the Director's decision is subject to review.

In summary, a defender's card is deemed played when:

- It would have been possible for the partner to see its face

### Declarer's Card Played from Hand

45C2

Declarer's card detached from hand is played when it is a) held face up, touching or nearly touching the table, or b) maintained in such a position to indicate it has been played. It is irrelevant whether either or both of the defenders see the card.

Do not confuse declarer's exposed card, Law 48, with declarer's played card. Declarer is not required to play any card dropped accidentally, up to accidentally exposing the entire hand. The difference is accidental versus intentional. The major confusion probably arises in that declarer has no restriction for (accidentally) exposing a card and no card of declarer's or dummy's hand ever becomes a penalty card. But an exposed card is different than a played card.

In summary, declarer's card from hand is deemed played when:

- It is face up, nearly touching the table -or- maintained to indicate it has been played.

### Declarer's Card Played from Dummy

45C3

In playing from dummy, declarer makes a verbal statement of his/her intent of the card to be played. This designation presents a "slip of the tongue" possibility similar to the "slip of the fingers" that may occur with the bidding cards. Declarer may correct the call of a card if it is truly inadvertent and if there is no pause for thought. In this situation, declarer should not hesitate in immediately naming the card he/she meant to play. Do not call for the Director, do not wait for the Director to arrive; name the card you meant to play so there is no question it was a slip of the tongue not a reconsideration of how to proceed. If there is a dispute, that's the time to call the Director. After a change of a played card, an opponent may change a legal play made in turn, but prior to the correction.

In spite of the prior paragraph, a rapid tempo correction is not always sufficient to permit a change of designation. If declarer has prematurely made a call from dummy, let's say prior to Left Hand Opponent (LHO) playing, and then sees an unexpected card from LHO, no correction is permitted, no matter how quickly declarer voices it. The initial call is deemed intended, careless, but intended, and as such, must stand.

In summary, you may change a card incorrectly called from dummy if:

- The call was truly unintended
- The change is voiced without pause for thought