

How to Appear Professional (even if you aren't) by Larry Cohen



For any golf fans reading, I wanted to call this article, "spot the hacker." That should give you a clue as to the path I am heading down.

I know that most bridge players want to have a good time and enjoy the game. Wonderful! But, along the way, here are some tips on how to appear/act more professional. It will be good for your image.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE



Sit up straight (no slumping) in the chair. Hold your cards close so nobody else at the table can see them (the sure sign of a beginner is to hold his cards out too far in front). Concentrate! Or, at least appear to concentrate. Try to block out the fact that it might be too hot or too cold or too noisy. Don't let others see your mind/eyes wandering. No faces during the bidding or play. Keep a poker face at all times.

WHAT TO SAY (and not say)



No yelling at or criticizing partner. Try some smiles and laughter. No unsolicited post-mortems (better to be silent and thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt). Don't show ignorance by reacting to other results shown on the Bridgemate ("look Madge, everyone else made it!") So what? Maybe every other table gave bad defense. In-game results are for amusement purposes only. Show good manners. Be polite to partner and the opponents. Anything less shows a lack of professionalism.

TEMPO

Don't make extra-fast plays or bids. All bridge actions must be made in a calm, even-mannered tempo. This isn't to say that you won't have to think extra long at times--thinking is allowed. No problem there. But, avoid any fast and snappy actions that convey unauthorized information. No coffee housing (thinking when there is nothing to think about). Always strive to display perfect ethics.

TIME



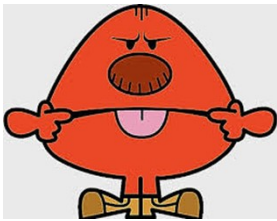
Don't needlessly hold up the game. Don't postmortem the previous deal when time is short. Pick up your hand, sort it, and get to the bidding without delaying the game. When you are on opening lead, don't first start writing in your personal scorecard. Make your lead, and then write. If you surely have all high cards left (the rest of the tricks) and trumps are drawn, claim.

DURING THE AUCTION



If ever your RHO opens, say 1 \heartsuit , and you happen to have 7 of them, don't give the show away. Don't ask, "How many diamonds does that promise?" Also, don't ask silly or useless questions. If you really need to know the meaning of an alert (because you are thinking of entering the bidding), wait until your turn and then ask. Most alerts (especially when you are passing throughout) can wait until after the auction—you do yourself a disservice by asking during the auction. If your opponents have the auction to themselves and suddenly jump to 4NT, what good is it to ask the meaning? You only help the opponents by asking. Avoid making silly doubles. If you open 2 \spadesuit , and the opponents later cue-bid 3 \spadesuit , you show your naivety if you innocently double and maybe laugh and ask if it is your lead. By giving them extra space to pass or redouble to convey information, such doubles only help your opponents.

PLAYING YOUR CARDS RIGHT



Please don't slap or snap or "toss" them. Don't appear obnoxious.

AFTER THE GAME



It is always a good idea to seek (open mindedly) the advice of better players. When you do so, don't then argue with their answer. Good idea: Give them your hand in order with 13 cards. It is the sure sign of an amateur to say, "Well, 5 clubs, to the ace, I think...and four hearts...no three hearts...and something in spades, wait a minute..."

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