

TD NEWSLETTER 2

It is now over four months since the first TD newsletter. I have been asked to cover various issues in this edition.

Remember that a summary in the first newsletter was

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.

This is generally being observed. But some players still ask questions during the auction when they were going to pass, whatever the answer.

I must stress that the objectives of these newsletters is to maintain a friendly atmosphere whilst, at the same time, encouraging players not to do anything that might be considered to be unethical. This newsletter covers how to use the bidding box correctly and how to cope with hesitation in the bidding and play.

As before, 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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USING THE BIDDING BOXES

I notice that some people start to pull out a bid or a pass or a double and then change their minds? What should I do?

Simple – call the TD (after saying something like “I just need to ask the TD something about the bidding”). The EBU states that “Players should refrain from touching any cards in the box until they have determined their call.” It is totally wrong to fiddle with the cards in the bidding box, first pulling one out and then another.

What is the problem if I do “think with my fingers”?

You are in danger of giving unauthorised information to your partner – they will be aware that you have a choice of calls.

Can you give me an example?

Suppose a player starts to pull out a Pass card and then changes his mind and bids 2♠. That is really just the same as saying “Pass” and then immediately “Two spades”. It is a change of mind, no matter how quickly it is corrected. The law forbids a change of call.

When is a call considered to be made (has the card got to be on the table)?

The EBU states “A call is considered to have been made when the call is removed from the bidding box with apparent intent”. So if you start to pull out a card, then the call is made.

What if it is a genuine mistake?

If you make a genuine mistake it is best to offer to call the TD. For example, suppose you intended to raise your partner’s 1♥ to 2♥ but you pull out the 2♠ card and put it on the table. If it is a genuine mistake and, provided your partner hasn’t called again, then the TD will allow you to change your unintended call.

Suppose I don’t notice my error immediately?

Provided you notice your error before your partner has called again, you can still change your mistaken call.

Players sometimes say “sorry – that was a mechanical error” and then change their call. Is that ok?

No. Call the TD. In my experience the expression “that was a mechanical error” is getting abused. For example, you hold

♠KQ92

♥KQ92

♦2

♣KQ92

You start to pull out the 1♥ card and then immediately change it to 1♣. That is unlikely to be a mechanical error. It looks like you suddenly remembered which suit to open holding a 4-4-1-4 hand. So it is a change of mind, even though it was made immediately.

If I hesitate for a long time and then use the bidding box correctly, what are the consequences?

Partner must be careful to avoid gaining an advantage through your hesitation and must bid as though you hadn’t hesitated.

Can you give me an example?

Your right hand opponent opens 1NT and you hesitate before passing. Your partner now knows that you probably have an opening hand and perhaps you were thinking of opening 1NT yourself. Suppose the next player passes and your partner holds:

♠KQJ987

♥7

♦KQ2

♣642

Partner is perfectly entitled to bid 2♠ if that is what he was always going to bid, whether you had hesitated or not.

But suppose your partner holds

♠QJ752

♥K76

♦K76

♣64

Bidding 2♠ now looks a very dubious action and could have been suggested by the hesitation. The opposition would be quite entitled to call the TD and ask for a ruling.

Players sometimes say “I am reserving my rights”. What does that mean?

Take the last example above. An opponent might say something like “can we agree there has been a hesitation after the 1NT opening?” If the answer is yes, then he might then say “well I would just like to reserve my right to call the director”. What that means is that he is **not** accusing you of any wrong doing. He is just saying that if the 2♠ bid gives you a good score, he might then call the TD to ask for a ruling.

HESITATING DURING THE PLAY

Some players hesitate when they have a singleton. Is that allowed?

Absolutely not. It is totally illegal.

What happens if I didn't notice it was my turn to play and I have then hesitated with a singleton?

It is best to apologise and state that you had nothing to think about.

What about hesitating with 2 small cards?

Again deciding which of 2 small cards is not an excuse for hesitating.

When might I hesitate?

You might hesitate if you have a good bridge reason for thinking. Suppose you make the opening lead, won by declarer who then leads ♠Q. You hold K 9 3 2 and dummy has A 4. Now you have something to think about. Do you cover the Queen with the King, hoping to promote something in partner's hand? Or do you play small, hoping to win you King later? Obviously declarer is entitled draw conclusions from your hesitation.

TIPS

- 1. Determine your call before reaching for the bidding box.**
- 2. Then remove the bidding card without dithering.**
- 3. Try to avoid hesitating when it might give unauthorised information to partner and/or mislead the opposition.**