

Hesitations – Do you know the Laws?

Hesitations – being told that you cannot bid after partner has hesitated can be a very off-putting experience for new players and we would ask all players, even if they think that they know the rules, not to tell other players during the play what they can and cannot do.

If you are concerned that you have been damaged by any incident, PLEASE call the Director. DIY directing is almost always seen as ‘bullying’ by other players, even if it done with the best intentions. *Law 74A2 applies here. A player should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game.*

More details can be found in extracts from EBU documents – see below - You will immediately realise that you do not know the Laws well enough to make a decision and many Directors have to check the Law book to get this right! Hesitating and passing is not the only situation where ‘unauthorised information’ can be given out and players should be careful not to use any information if it is not ‘authorised’ information.

Examples - A good example of why you cannot be told that you cannot bid after partner’s hesitation is when you are sitting 4th in hand with 25 points planning to open 2C. Dealer passes and Partner thinks for long time before passing. What are they thinking about? You do not know!! They could have 7 of a suit and be considering a pre-empt, they might almost have a weak 2 in a major or they might be considering a light opener. Do you care? No, you are going to open 2C whichever hand they have and the fact that they have hesitated is of no interest and has not affected your choice of bid.

Another example: You are dealer with 6 spades and 5 diamonds and a reasonable hand, but not good enough to open 2C. You open 1S and the player on your left bids 2C. Partner hesitates before passing. The right hand opponent passes. To be told that you cannot bid 2D is clearly wrong. What was partner thinking about? Probably they have a weak hand with lots of hearts or lots of clubs. Does this possible knowledge affect your bid? No – in fact it could encourage you to pass – then you might be taking advantage of using unauthorised information!

Law 73C: When a player has available to him unauthorized information from his partner, such as from a remark, question, explanation, gesture, mannerism, undue emphasis, inflection, haste or hesitation, an unexpected alert or failure to alert, he must carefully avoid taking any advantage from that unauthorized information.

Hesitations don't just occur with inexperienced players. In the semi-final of the Bermuda Bowl in 2015 (International Event) there was a hesitation that lasted about 6 minutes, after which the hesitator Passed and his partner bid. Naturally, the English Team got a director's ruling which said the bid was OK. This decision was appealed but the director's ruling was upheld by the Appeals' Committee. England lost the semi-final by 2 IMPs!

OK – So what should you do when a player hesitates?

Firstly, we would ask you to consider who you are playing against. Is it a new player who is unsure what to do on many hands and regularly takes a long time to bid? If so, we would ask you to be understanding – we all had to learn once!

If the hesitation is very long, or the player suggests that they may have bid something different by half reaching for the bidding box and changing their mind, then you should try to get agreement from the opponents that there was a 'hesitation' and just say that you reserve your right to call the director at the end of the hand. Please do this in a calm and friendly way – we are not at war! If at the end of the hand you consider that you may have been damaged by the hesitation, then call the director. Please consider the result first – you may have a good score anyway and no action is needed. Calling the director always takes time and can discourage new players from playing.

LAW 16: AUTHORIZED AND UNAUTHORIZED INFORMATION

(Section B Only – see Law 16 for full explanation)

B. Extraneous Information from Partner 1. (a) After a player makes available to his partner extraneous information that may suggest a call or play, as for example by a remark, a question, a reply to a question, an unexpected alert or failure to alert, or by unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement, or mannerism, the partner may not choose from among logical alternatives one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the extraneous information. (b) A logical alternative action is one that, among the class of players in question and using the methods of the partnership, would be given serious consideration by a significant proportion of such players, of whom it is judged some might select it. When a player considers that an opponent has made such information available and that damage could well result he may announce that he reserves the right to summon the Director later (the opponents should summon the Director immediately if they dispute the fact that unauthorized information might have been conveyed).

3 It is not an infraction to call the Director earlier or later.

3. When a player has substantial reason to believe that an opponent who had a logical alternative has chosen an action that could have been suggested by such information, he should summon the Director when play ends

The Director shall assign an adjusted score (see Law 12C) if he considers that an infraction of law has resulted in an advantage for the offender.

Advice to Appeals Committees and Tournament Directors on the impact of the 2007 Laws regarding logical alternatives

Revised February 2009

Abbreviations

AC Appeals Committee

LA Logical Alternative

TD Tournament Director

Is an action a logical alternative?

Law 16B1(b)

A logical alternative action is one that, among the class of players in question and using the methods of the partnership, would be given serious consideration by a significant proportion of such players, of whom it is judged some might select it.

When deciding whether an action constitutes an LA under the 2007 Laws, the TD should decide two things.

1. He should decide whether a significant proportion of the player's peers, playing the same system as the player, would consider the action.

What is a "significant proportion"? The Laws do not specify a figure, but the TD should assume that it means at least one player in five.

If a significant proportion of the player's peers would not consider the action, it is not an LA.

2. If a significant proportion would consider the action, then the TD should next decide whether some would actually choose it.

Again the Laws do not specify a figure for "some", and the TD should assume that it means more than just an isolated exception.

If no one or almost no one would choose the action having considered it, the action is not an LA.