

AYRSHIRE BRIDGE UNION

Behaviour & Etiquette Guidelines

Playing well together - on the cards and off them

Bridge is at its best when everyone at the table - new member or seasoned expert — feels welcome, respected and fairly treated. These guidelines aren't a rulebook to catch people out; they're a shared understanding of **how we look after each other** while we play the game we love. They cover two things: getting the **procedures** right (so the game stays fair), and getting the **atmosphere** right (so the game stays fun). Please read them in that spirit.

A. Be Welcoming — Our Key Aim

This is the heart of what we're asking of every ABU member. A friendly club keeps players; an unfriendly one loses them.

- **Remember everyone was a beginner once.** A little patience with a newer player's pace or questions goes a long way, and it's how our clubs grow.
- **Keep frustration off the table.** Disagreements with partner should never turn into a telling-off in front of the opponents - raise it kindly, and later.
- **Confident, experienced players set the tone.** If you're one of the stronger players locally, your good grace matters more, not less - newcomers watch how you behave.
- **No sneering, gloating or sarcasm** - about your own good result or someone else's mistake. Every player, at every level, deserves to be treated with courtesy.



B. Playing to the Rhythm - Tempo & Hesitation

It is completely normal - and fair - to pause and think. What matters is what happens next.

- **Take the time you need** to think before a bid or a play - nobody should feel rushed.
- **Ensure you play at the same pace as all other pairs** to help keep the tournament running smoothly for everyone
- **Try to bid in one clean movement.** Reaching towards the bidding box, drawing back, and repeating this a few times before finally bidding can unintentionally signal something to partner - even when no signal is intended.
- **If your partner hesitates,** you must not take advantage of that information — bid and play exactly as you would have done if there had been no hesitation at all. This protects both sides of the table.
- **Use the STOP card** for jump bids and opening jumps - take it out, leave it on the table for a full ten seconds, then put it away. It gives the next player a natural, unpressured pause to think - good for everyone.



C. Talking at the Table

A few simple habits keep information fair and conversation friendly.

- **Ask about the bidding only on your turn**, and only if the answer will actually affect your bid or play. If you don't intend to bid, there's no need to ask. Ask the partner of the player who made the bid, not the bidder.
- **Save the post-mortem.** It's tempting to relive a board straight away, but please wait until the round is finished - and keep it quiet, as neighbouring tables can often overhear.
- **Keep table chat quiet.** It's rarely a good idea to discuss a hand at the table at all — but if you do, keep your voice down. Loud chat doesn't just distract neighbouring tables, it can affect their concentration and may even give away key hand information to players who haven't played the board yet. The same applies to general conversation - keep it low enough that it stays at your own table, and please make sure it doesn't annoy other players nearby.
- **Say nothing about the hand** until bidding and play are complete, other than answering a legitimate question.
- **Greet your opponents warmly** at the start of every round - even if you're mid-conversation about the last board.



D. Keeping It Fair - Table Mechanics

Small habits that keep boards, scores and information straight for everyone.

Before Bidding

- **North is responsible for managing boards and scoring:** ensure you have the correct boards correctly oriented, you accurately enter the score (verified by East), and pass boards to the right table at the end of the round.
- **Summarize your basic system** when beginning a set of hands with a new pair of opponents [e.g. 'We play 12-14 NT and 4-card majors', 'We play 15-17 NT and 5-card majors', or 'We play Precision'].
- **Count your 13 cards before you look at them.** If the count is wrong, call the Director straight away

When Bidding

- **Alert clearly.** Make sure both opponents can see the ALERT card, and follow the SBU rules on announcing and alerting.
- **Place the STOP card on the table for the full ten seconds** before the next player calls - it's there to give a genuine pause, not just a formality.

During Play

- **Keep the board on the table**, correctly oriented in the centre of the table, until the hand is finished. This isn't just good practice - it's a legal requirement - and it brings real benefits too: everyone at the table can see the vulnerability and how it may affect bidding and strategy, and it's far less likely that cards get reinserted into the wrong slot. Misplaced cards do happen, and when they do, it can wreck the scoring for every pair who plays that board
- **When making your opening lead, keep the card face down** and ask your partner 'Any questions?' This ensures you do not lead out of turn and allows partner to clarify the meaning of any opposition bids. You can then turn the card face up to complete the lead. You are not permitted to change your chosen opening lead based on any information provided by opponents in response to your partner's question.

After Play

- **When returning the cards to boards, please reshuffle the cards**, especially if the board has been passed out
- **Share the score.** When verifying the result on the scoring device, show it to all players at the table - don't just nod and say nothing. Everyone wants to know what happened on the hand.



E. When Things Feel Difficult

Every player has an off day, and some players face extra challenges. Here's how we handle both, kindly.

- **Call the Director, don't referee it yourself.** If you think something has gone wrong - a hesitation, a misunderstanding, an error - the Director is there to sort it out fairly. Call them calmly: "Director, please."
- **Be generous about additional needs.** Some players may need a little more patience or a small accommodation for health or other personal reasons. Please extend goodwill rather than judgement.
- **If a pattern of behaviour is genuinely spoiling your game,** raise it privately with your Club Committee or the ABU afterwards, rather than at the table.
- **Keep it calm, whatever the moment.** Bridge can raise strong feelings - that's part of why we love it - but there's no place at our tables for raised voices or confrontation. If things ever feel heated, stepping back and calling the Director (or later, the Committee) protects everyone, including you.

In short: *play fair, be patient, be kind — and let's keep Ayrshire bridge a game everyone wants to come back to.*