

Are You a Good Dummy?

In a casual bridge game, being dummy is your chance to get some snacks, take a peek at partner's cards, or chat with another player. I'm sure you realize by now that the same is not true in a duplicate game. The dummy has rights and responsibilities, and of course, should be aware of the regulations governing dummy's behavior.

Cardinal Rule Number One:

"Dummy must not participate in the play, nor may he communicate anything about the play to declarer; dummy may not call attention to an irregularity during the play; unless attention has been drawn to an irregularity by another player, dummy should not initiate a call for the Director during play." Let's see if you pass the "Beginning Dummy" test.

1. The opening lead is made. It happens to be a club, and you have a singleton club. When you're laying down the dummy, do you take that club and place it in the played position? If so, you flunked the first test. Dummy plays the cards only as directed by the declarer - even if declarer has only one option.
2. You're watching the play and realize that one of the opponents revoked. You immediately tell your partner and call the director. Uh-oh! Wrong again! Dummy must wait until the play of the hand is over before pointing out an irregularity and calling the director.

Let's move on to the "Intermediate Dummy" test. The dummy is declarer's agent and must play the card designated by the declarer. Proper designation of a card includes the statement of both suit and rank, but just in case a declarer fails to provide this complete designation, there are rules to be followed. Do you know them? Here's your hand, as play progresses:

1. ♠AJT73
♥QJ2
♦A8
♣Q53

2. ♠JT73
♥QJ
♦A8
♣Q53

3. ♠T73
♥QJ
♦8
♣Q53

4. ♠T73
♥J
♦
♣Q53

1. The opening lead is the ♥4 and partner says, "Play." What do you do? If you ask, "Which one?" you're incorrect. When declarer designates a suit but not a rank, the card played is the lowest card in the suit. You should play the ♥2.
2. Your partner won a trick with the ♠A. He now says, "Jack." Did you ask, "Which one?" Wrong again. When declarer names a rank but not a suit, he is deemed to have continued the suit in which dummy won the preceding trick. You should play the ♠J.

3. Partner wins a trick in dummy with the ♦A. He now says, "Queen." Did you ask, "Which one?" If so, you're right! There is no ♦Q, but there are two other queens. Declarer must designate the one to be played.
4. Partner plays the ♦Q from his hand and says, "Play anything." You start to play the ♠3, and a defender says, "Play the ♣Q." What do you play? The ♣Q, of course. If declarer fails to designate both rank and suit, the opponents are allowed to tell dummy what card to play!

Cardinal Rule Number Two:

"Dummy may not exchange hands with declarer; dummy may not leave his seat to watch declarer's play; dummy may not, on his own initiative, look at the face of a card in either defender's hand." If you do any of these things, you lose all your dummy rights, and partner may be subject to penalties if you say anything. What are your rights as dummy?

- ♣ Dummy may ask declarer, but not a defender, when he has failed to follow suit to a trick, whether he has a card of the suit led. If you've broken rule number two, and this happens, partner may be penalized with an established revoke, if he did have a card in the suit led.
- ♣ Dummy may try to prevent any irregularity by declarer. For example, if partner starts to play from the wrong hand, you may remind him where he is, but you cannot do so before every play. This would be considered participating in the play of the hand.
- ♣ Dummy may draw attention to any irregularity, but only after play of the hand is concluded. (Remember rule number one?)
- ♣ Dummy or either defender may draw attention to a card pointed incorrectly, but this right expires when a lead is made to the following trick. (This time limitation does not exist for the declarer.)

Cardinal Rule Number Three:

"Dummy must never, never, never tell declarer how he should have made the hand - at least, not until the game is over and you're discussing the hands over a nice meal!" You won't find this rule in the Laws of Duplicate Bridge, but it's a great dummy rule, nevertheless. Above all, dummy should be a considerate partner.

Closing Tip of the Week:

You're dummy and partner is playing a no trump contract. When laying down the dummy, place your longest suit to your left - as far away from the usual trump suit position as possible. Even world champions have been known to forget the contract when tempted by a long suit in the trump position.