

FVBC Talk – Bridge Procedures, Rules & Etiquette

6. What Would You Do... Asking Questions & Answering Questions from Opponents

Whenever it is your turn to act (to bid or play a card) you are entitled to ask the opponents questions about their bidding or play. If your question concerning North's bid or play, you should ask South to explain.

Questions should not be asked if they could indicate something about *your* hand, or suggest an action from your partner. For example, suppose that on the way to a 6H contract your LHO bids 4NT (Blackwood) and your RHO responds 5D. You pass and LHO bids 6H. Before making the 3rd pass to end the auction, you ask Declarer "what did the 5D bid mean?" You do this to suggest to your partner to lead diamonds. You are void in diamonds, and you want to ruff the first trick and set the contract with your ace of spades.

This is an improper question. If the Director is called by Declarer at the end of the hand, Director should adjust the score if there was any reasonable alternative to the suggested diamond lead, and if that alternate lead would improve the result for the non-offending side.

The following three scenarios will test your knowledge and instincts about addressing questions during the auction and play:

1. Opponents are in a 4S contract. On the 3rd round of spades, your partner discards a 6C. Declarer asks about your discards.

You say: "We play upside-down discards. A small card encourages me to play that suit, and a high card discourages."

Declarer asks: "is the 6 high or low?"

You see the 2 in dummy and you hold the 3, 4 and 5. How should you answer?

- A) It's low.
- B) I don't know.
- C) That's up to us to figure out.

Answer: C. You have explained your carding convention, as required. You are not expected to say more.

2. You open 1D and LHO bids 1H. Your partner bids 3H. You don't recall discussing this type of bid with partner. You're guessing that your partner has a weak hand with shortness in hearts.

RHO asks "What does the 3H bid mean?" How should you reply?

- A) It is a weak hand, with shortness in hearts.
- B) I'm not sure, but I am taking it as a weak hand with shortness in hearts.
- C) I don't know.

ANSWER: C. You are required to explain your agreed conventions. There will be some sequences that have not been discussed. Alternately, you might say "We have not discussed that bid" or "We have no agreement". If there WAS an agreement that you forgot, then your partner should explain it to the opponents at the appropriate time (before opening lead if your side is declarer, or at the end of the hand if your side is defending).

3. In 3rd seat your partner opens 1H. RHO passes and you bid 2C. This is Drury, a conventional bid showing 3-card heart support and 10-12 HCP. Partner does not alert the bid. You are careful not to react. This is followed by three passes, and you are declarer at 2C. What should you do?
- A) Don't say anything. You made a proper bid.
 - B) Before the opening lead, tell you opponents that there was a failure to alert and explain the meaning of the 2C bid.
 - C) Explain the 2C bid, but only after the 13th trick is played.

ANSWER: B. Your partner's failure to alert misinformed the opponents about your hand. They deserve to know what your bids mean. If the opponents believe that they would have gotten a better result had they understood your bid (e.g., perhaps they had a club fit and could have made 3C, but were discouraged to bid by your bid that appeared to show a strong club suit), they should call the Director and seek an equitable adjustment.

In summary:

- A player may ask for an explanation of an opponent's bid or play.
- The question should be asked to the *partner* of the person whose bid or play prompted the question.
- The question may be asked only when it is the questioner's turn to act (bid or play).
- If there is bidding misinformation (such as a failure to alert, or an incorrect explanation of a bid) by the Declaring side, Declarer should inform the opponents before the opening lead.
- If there is bidding misinformation by the defending side, the defender should inform Declarer *at the end of play*. Explaining before the play of the hand will awaken the other defender to their mistake.
- Call the Director, to make sure that everyone's rights are protected.