

BRIDGE ETIQUETTE

IRREGULARITIES

When there is any irregularity at the table such as a revoke, an insufficient bid, a hesitation, lead out of turn or bad behavior, it is time to call “director please,” in a pleasant, non-threatening tone. Do not try to sort things out for yourselves or make your own ruling.

Leads out of turn – You are declaring 4H and your RHO makes the opening lead. Oops! You appropriately call the director (please) to the table and she gives you **five** options. Oy! How do you decide what to do? Here are the choices you will be given:

Accept lead then:

1. Make partner declarer
2. Remain the declarer, but look at dummy before you play

Reject lead then:

3. Require the lead of that suit (card is picked up - no penalty card)
4. Forbid lead of that suit (card is picked up - no penalty card)
5. Let them lead anything (penalty card to be played at first legal opportunity)

You probably feel very uncomfortable when this happens. You don't know what to do. Here are some things to think about:

- Do you want that suit led? If no, reject the lead. For example, you are in a notrump contract with no stopper - forbid the lead of that suit. The lead reverts to your LHO who must lead some other suit. RHO picks up her card.
- Can you get a “free” trick? For example, you have the king in that suit and LHO overcalled it - require that LHO lead the suit and be guaranteed to score your king.
- Are you tired and have a partner who is a better declarer? Become dummy.
- Is there is a danger suit that wasn't led – accept the lead and see dummy before you play. After all, if the opponents don't know whose lead it is, then they probably don't know what the right lead is. :)
- We almost never take the penalty card option

Hesitations

- It is always okay to think during an auction. Stopping to think does not limit your options.
- Taking time to think conveys information to everyone at the table.
- This information is authorized to the opponents, but unauthorized to partner.
- When possible, it is good to decide first that you are going to take an action (other than pass) before thinking about what that action will be.
- Taking an action after thinking is much less likely to bar partner than passing after some thought.
- Hesitations, in and of themselves, do not bar partner.
- But, if partner bids after your hesitation, she must have a **clear** action.
- A clear action is one that more than five out of six of your **peers** would take.
- Anything less than that and the score will be adjusted.

When there has been a hesitation during the auction, best procedure is to get everyone to agree that a hesitation has occurred before calling the director.

Penalty cards - Major penalty cards arise in different circumstances. For instance,

- You drop a trump or an honor card
- You revoke, but catch it before your side plays to the next trick
- You lead a card out of turn

What to do? If you are declarer and you are on lead, consider your options:

- Can you take a finesse into that hand for free?
- If you can make the partner win a trick while the penalty card is still on the table, you can require or forbid the lead of that suit
- If it was an honor, lead a suit you know they are out of and force them to discard the penalty card

DO's & DON'T's

- DO be nice and above all respectful of all players and directors.
- DO try to keep your emotions in check.
- DON'T ask questions in passout seat UNLESS you are considering taking a call other than pass. Asking questions before partner selects her lead may be suggestive of certain leads, passing unauthorized information (UI) to partner. This in turn may lead to penalties.
- DO make your lead before writing your personal score. This helps speed up the game. You can write your personal score while declarer is (hopefully :) studying dummy before playing to trick one.
- DON'T comment on your opponents' bid or play unless asked
- DON'T give unsolicited lessons to your opponents on their bidding or play. Seriously, don't do it.
- DON'T criticize your partner at the table... just pleasantly move on to the next hand. If you are working on a long-term partnership, you could make notes on your private score during the game and analyze the hands, with hand records, after the game.
- DO use your alert card. If a bid is alertable, you should say "alert" as well as tap the table with the alert card. All bids in red on the convention card are alertable. It is best to give your opponents an explanation of what the bid means, rather than just a convention name. Please note that all "announcements" are also alerts!
- DON'T speak when the director is called to the table unless you are the person who summoned her or the director asks you a question.