

Handy Guide for New Players

It is always challenging for new or novice players to get their heads around bridge etiquette and ways to behave as a responsible partner and considerate player. These tips may help you on your way.

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Systems and Systems Card

Playing bridge you must disclose any conventions or special partnerships agreements. This is called your 'system' and partners have a 'system card' which describes the system. Playing at club bridge you will sometimes not need a system card, but playing at higher level competition bridge such as congresses, and the like, you will need a system card. There are good instructions on how to fill out a system card and standard proformas on the ABF web site <https://www.abf.com.au/member-services/system-cards/>.

Standard American is likely to be the system for most new players. However, other systems such as Precision, 2 Over 1, or Acol are also played. There are others but these are quite rare.

System cards are classified by colour: This is a broad classification of your bidding system and only refers to your 1 level opening bids. The options are green, blue, red and yellow. Green is the most common, and says that all of your 1 level opening bids are natural and promising at least 8 high card points. Suit bids must have at least 3 cards in that suit, but if you have a 4-4-3-2 shape with 3-2 in the minors you may open 1♣. Blue systems include a strong 1♣ or 1♦ opening. The most common is Precision where the 1♣ opening is strong and forcing (might not have any clubs). Opening bids of 1♥, 1♠ and 1NT are natural but the 1♦ opening can be artificial. If any of your 1 level openings is artificial, including a short 1♣ (except for 4-4-3-2 precisely) then your system is Red. Yellow is 'highly unusual' and best avoided. (yellow system cards are not allowed at some congresses).

Pre-Alerts

Before commencing play you should acquaint your opponents of your basic system, length of one level openings, strength and style of your 1NT opening. Also mention now any unusual features of your bidding and play agreements.

Announcements

The responder is required to make an announcement on the partners lead immediately the first bid is made if the bid is 1♣ or 1NT. A bid of 1♣ is not alerted even when artificial.

Usually where a green system is played, you should announce the number of clubs shown by partners 1♣ opening. That is say "2+" or "3+" or "4+".

For Red and Blue Systems announce the meaning of that bid in your system. Where a bid of 1♣ can be strong - Say "Strong" together with the minimum high card points (hcp) eg "18+".

On an opening bid of 1NT announce the hcp shown by partners bid eg 12-14, 15-17, 16-18.

Alerts during Opening

These notify your opponents that your partner's call has a special meaning. Say the word "Alert" and circle your partner's call. Don't give an explanation unless an opponent asks.

What to alert

- conventional bids (unless self-alerting or announced) and conventional passes up to and including 3NT
- conventional opening bids above 3NT

Do not Alert:

- 2c in the specific sequence INT (P) 2c
- bids in a denomination already bid or shown by an opponent (cue bids)
- calls above 3NT unless a conventional opening bid
- Doubles and Redoubles

These calls are considered to be self-alerting

Delayed alerts

At the end of the auction, before the opening lead is faced, the declaring side (only) should draw attention to any unusual features of their auction particularly unusual self-alerting calls.

This is done by putting a small + in the appropriate square of the bidding pad. Do not give an explanation unless asked.

Particularly if a lot of +'s are necessary, it may be easiest to say something like "Would you like an explanation of our auction"? It has a number of self-alerting calls, to the player who is to make the opening lead.

Preventing Irregularities

Any player, including dummy, may attempt to prevent another player committing an irregularity but dummy is subject to dummy's rights and limitations.

How to be a Good Dummy

When displaying the dummy, make sure all 13 cards are visible. An adjusted score may be necessary if the opponents are damaged because a card was hidden.

Concentrate on the play of the hand because

- Declarer will find it easier to play the hand if dummy is attentive
- At the end of play dummy may point out a revoke
- Dummy may try to prevent any irregularity. Once an irregularity has already happened, dummy must say and do nothing until play has been completed
- The declarer has failed to follow suit, dummy may ask if he has revoked eg "having none" or "no spades partner"? (Note that declarer is not required to say, "having none" when ruffing or discarding)
- Dummy may tell any player that his most recently quitted trick is pointing the wrong way. This right ends for dummy (and similarly for the other players) when his side has led or played to the next trick.
- Dummy may give information, in the Director's presence, as to fact or law

Ways to Avoid Being a Bad Dummy

Dummy May Not:

- Play a card from the dummy unless told to do so by declarer
- Suggest a card be played eg by moving a hand toward it
- Ask defenders if they may have revoked
- Call attention to an irregularity until the hand is finished
- Call for the director during play unless another player has already pointed out the irregularity
- Look at a defender's hand while play is in progress
- Leave his seat to watch declarer playing the hand

Claims and Concessions

A claim should be accompanied by a clear statement as to how the remaining tricks will be won and/or lost.

After a claim, or concession play pauses. If you feel an opponent's claim or concession is invalid you have the option of requesting that play continues. If all four players agree to play on then play may continue. The table result is final. Otherwise, Call the Director.

Some Random Do's and Don'ts

Do:

Have Fun!!!!

Call the Director if you have any concerns about something happening at your table.

Count your cards before you look at them.

Make your opening lead face down. Wait until partner confirms that he has no questions before you turn it face up.

Turn off phones ipads etc during sessions. Raise a hand when calling the Director

Hand one copy of your system card to each opponent before starting to play.

Don't

- Be talked out of calling the Director if YOU think it is the right thing to do
- Discuss results in a loud voice while the session is in progress.
- Look at your own system card after taking your cards from a board and before returning them at the end of play. An exception is that presumed dummy and Presumed declarer may .

Unauthorised Information (UI)

What Do I Do If.....

- Partner pulls a face, gestures, makes a comment, takes a long time to call etc any of which might suggest to me something about his hand or call.
To accidentally create or receive unauthorised information is not an infraction. Make sure that your calls are based only on your system. Calls must not be based on UI
- I learn something about a board I am yet to play or see cards belonging to an opponent before the play begins? **Call the Director straight away**
- I think an opponents call may have been influenced by UI?
It is usually best to wait until the hand has been completed. Then, if you think you may have been damaged, Call the Director. It is OK to draw attention to an opponent's UI sooner, perhaps by telling your opponents that you may wish to call the Director later. If there is any disagreement as to whether UI exists, call the Director straight away.

Assorted Q&A

What Do I Do If.....

- Partner does not alert my bid when I think he should have?
- I think partner has explained one of my calls incorrectly"

In both cases, during an auction, do and say nothing. Give no indication that anything is wrong. If you expect to be dummy or declarer, Call the Director after the auction has ended

If you are to be a defender say and do nothing until the hand has been played out, then call the Director

- I realise that I have failed to alert?
- I realise I have given a wrong explanation?

In both cases your minimum obligation is to Call the Director before the opening lead is faced. You may call sooner

- I am asked to explain partners call but I have forgotten our agreement?

Call the Director This as a very specific situation just for when you and your partner have an agreement but you have forgotten it and cannot explain it when asked to do so.

- I have revoked and neither I nor my partner has led or played to the following trick

Call the Director. Your revoke is not yet established and must be corrected

- Someone draws attention to an irregularity?

Call the Director If you allow your opponents to make rulings. and they are wrong, any errors are not going to be in your favour.

- I have made a wrong call according to our system" I have misbid

This is not an infraction It is important to do nothing that could alert partner to your call not being systemic. Your opponents are not entitled to be told about misbids. They are entitled to an accurate description of the system you and partner have agreed to play.

- I want to know something about the opponent's auction or signalling agreements?

Ask at your turn to call or at your turn to play a card. You may ask about specific calls but this may create UI for partner. Often a more general enquiry is best eg "could you explain your auction please". After the opening lead has been placed face down declarer and the other defender may ask about the auction.

Note – this guide is adapted from the "Handy Guide – Novice" distributed at the gold coast congress.