

# The 2017 Laws of Bridge

A Guide for Players

(Deals with correct procedures - not rectifications)

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## Introduction

- ▶ Laws are revised every 10 years or so.
- ▶ The new laws have tried to be easier to read and understand.
- ▶ Laws are slightly fairer to sides that bid out of turn or make insufficient bids.
- ▶ This PowerPoint presentation generally deals with changes in procedures, NOT rectifications.
- ▶ Efforts are made to keep the same rule numbers between revisions. This year only one rule has been significantly moved (Law 23 to Law 72C to make way for a new definition)
- ▶ So Let's Start at the beginning with changes to "Definitions"

## Changes to ‘Definitions’

- ▶ An ‘artificial call’ includes ones that conveys information other than (or in addition to) the denomination last named, a pass that promises more than a certain amount of strength or that promises or denies strength in a suit other than the last one named.
- ▶ Dummy now ‘ceases to be dummy when play ends’
- ▶ ‘Misinformation’ is now defined as failure to accurately disclose partnership method or understanding as and when required by law or regulation
- ▶ ‘Presumed Declarer’ is defined as one who in the absence of an irregularity would become declarer.
- ▶ ‘Tournament’ is defined as a synonym for event.
- ▶ ‘Visible card’ is one whose face may be seen by EITHER opponent or partner.

## Law 1 : The Pack

- ▶ B. The Regulating Authority may require the face of each card to be symmetrical
- ▶ C. The backs of each card should be identical and contain a point of symmetry. (i.e. it is impossible to tell which way the card is played/ held)

### Comment

B. This specifically empowers Regulating Authorities to use those cards where the central suit is broken into two top parts. This reduces the ease of using the placement of the card on the table to convey information.

## Law 6 - The Shuffle and Deal

- ▶ B... No two adjacent cards from the deck shall be dealt into the same hand.

### Comment

This means that you can deal 'A B C D E D C B' A B C D E ... and merge hands A and E, but you can't deal 'A B C D D C B A'.

Random dealing is frowned upon as two cards may be dealt into the same hand by mistake.

The laws recommend dealing one at a time in a clockwise manner to each player - but this is not a requirement.

The best way of randomising is through several (7+) 'riffle shuffles' - an extra way is to shuffle each hand before combining them.

## Law 7 - control of board and cards

- ▶ A. The board shall 'remain correctly orientated' on the table until play is completed.
- ▶ B3. No player shall touch any cards but their own during play except by permission of an **opponent** or director.

### Comment

A - tidies up the law. You must leave the board on the table while play is in progress so that e.g. information about vulnerability is readily available.

B3 - this a significant change. Previously only the director could give permission, which meant that helpful players playing a card from dummy when the dummy had left the table were committing an irregularity. Now the declarer can give permission e.g. when he can't reach right across the table.

## Law 9 - Procedure following an Irregularity

- ▶ A3 Any player, including dummy, may try and prevent an irregularity (but for dummy subject to laws 42 and 43)
- ▶ A4 Dummy may not draw attention to an irregularity until play has concluded (but see law 20F5 for correction of Declarer's mistaken explanation)

### Comment

Previously dummy could only try and prevent an irregularity by declarer.

A4 will come up later when discussing modified claims procedures.

## Law 16 - Authorised and Unauthorised Information

- ▶ B1a a player may not choose a call or play that is demonstrably suggested over another by unauthorised information if the other call or play is a logical alternative.

### Comment

This corrects the possibility that a player could argue that their choice was not a logical alternative (which is what the old law implied was a requirement): now it only needs the other calls or play to be logical alternatives.

This also applies to an offending side from a withdrawn call or play (C2)

## Law 18 - Bids

- ▶ D) ... It is an infraction to make an insufficient bid (see law 27 for rectification)

### Comment

Previously, although there was rectification in place, there was no statement in the laws that an insufficient bid was actually an infraction. The only real affect of this is that a player may not now make an insufficient bid even if they are prepared to accept the penalty (72B) and that the director should be summoned (9B1).

## Law 20 - Review and explanation of calls

- ▶ F4a When a player realises during the auction that his own explanation was erroneous or incomplete he must summon the director before the end of the clarification period and correct the explanation. He may elect to call the director sooner, but he is under no obligation to do so (For correction during the play period see law 75B2)
- ▶ G1 A player may not ask a question if his sole purpose is to benefit partner
- ▶ G2 A player may not ask a question if his sole purpose is to elicit an incorrect response from an opponent.

### Comment

F1 - you must now explain all inferences, not just relevant ones. A player that is compelled to pass cannot now request a review and explanation.

F4 - Previously the duty under F4 applied immediately. Opponents are still protected if a corrected explanation is not given.

G1 - previously it was merely 'improper' to do so, but not actually an infraction.

G2 - this protects players from being 'tricked' into situations where their actions are going to be limited by law 16B or where opponents may claim misinformation. Also it means that a player cannot use the method to let his partner know opponents may be having a misunderstanding.

## Law 23 - Comparable call

The director should explain this when the need occurs, but in preparation

- ▶ A A comparable call is one that has the same or similar meaning to, or is a subset of the possible meanings of, or has the same purpose of the replaced call.
- ▶ B If a comparable call is available then there is no further rectification BUT
- ▶ C If the Director decides that the result of the board could well have been affected by the original infraction, he shall award an adjusted score.

### Comment

This extends the options available for replacing a withdrawn call.

Directors needn't worry - the old law 23 has been moved to law 72C

## Law 25 - Legal and illegal changes of call

- ▶ A1 If you discover that you have made a call you did not intend to make, you may, until your partner makes a call, change it! There is now no obligation to make the change 'without pause for thought'
- ▶ A2 The reason for the unintended call must be a mechanical error (pulling the wrong call from the bidding box) or a slip of the tongue (saying the wrong thing). You cannot change a call made due to lack of concentration

### Comment

If, for example, you forget you play transfers after 1NT is doubled and call '2 Hearts', and then realise that this actually implies spades (whether due to partner's alert or otherwise), then you can't change it.

The next batch of laws deal with how the director corrects irregularities and therefore not pertinent to this discussion.

## Law 40 - Partnership understandings

- ▶ A4 the agreed meaning of a call or play shall not alter by reference to the member of the partnership by whom it was made. (This does not restrict style or judgement, only method)
- ▶ B1a An agreement between partners, whether explicit or implicit, is a partnership understanding
- ▶ B2aiv The RA may disallow prior partnership agreement to vary its understandings during the auction or play following an irregularity by the opponents

### Comment

A4 formally a regulating authority could allow different meanings of calls/ plays depending on who made it. This option is now unavailable. So you can't have one person playing transfers and the other making weak take-outs after 1NT, to make sure the stronger player plays the hand. (You can have the stronger player making natural calls at the 3-level, when the weaker would initially transfer at the 2-level)

B1a defines a partnership understanding. This was how the law was interpreted but is now formally written down.

B2aiv But not presumably following your own irregularity. I assume this means you can have an agreement that if partner is going to be forced to pass then you play all calls as being natural.

This concludes the laws based generally on the auction period.

## Law 41 - commencement of play

- ▶ D - Dummy's Hand : the word 'separate' has been added to stop 'smart' people from putting down dummy in only two columns (for example) with two suits in each.

## Law 42 - Dummy's rights

- ▶ A3 - he plays the cards as declarer's agent as directed and ensures that Dummy follows suit (see law 45 if Dummy suggests a play)
- ▶ B2 - he may try to prevent any irregularity

### Comment

A3 - Previously, if declarer instructed dummy to revoke, then dummy had to revoke. Now at least you can prevent that

B2 - as mentioned before, previously this only applied to declarer's potential irregularity.

## Law 43 - Dummy's limitations

- ▶ A1a Dummy may not initiate a call for the director during play unless another player has drawn attention to an irregularity
- ▶ A3 A defender may not show dummy his hand

### Comment

A1a - this law has been strengthened (it was previously 'should not') - if you have been of the habit of calling the director then you are more likely to get penalised for doing so.

A3 - self explanatory. Showing dummy your hand may let your partner 'accidentally' see your cards, and the manner of doing so may pass information over.



## Law 45 - Card Played

- ▶ C4b Declarer may correct an unintended designation of a card from dummy until he next plays a card from his own hand or dummy. (this is only if the designation was a slip of the tongue, not a lapse of concentration)

### Comment

Previously this applied to any player but, as you can imagine, defenders don't normally 'designate' cards - they play them. If you were in the habit of saying "The ten of diamonds" when looking for a card to play from your hand as defender then you must now play it, (if you hold the card), even if you meant to say "The Ace of Diamonds".

## Law 46 - incomplete or invalid designation of a card from dummy

- ▶ If you call 'high' or 'low' (or similar) then this now refers to the suit led.

### Comment

This change was not strictly necessary (the requirement to follow suit takes precedence over all laws) - however it stops people from saying that dummy should revoke because the highest card is an Ace of another suit.

## Law 50 - disposition of a penalty card

- ▶ The director should explain the new rules but you should be aware
  - ▶ When the penalty card is on the table, information from the card and the requirements to play it are now authorised.
  - ▶ When it is returned to hand, information derived from it is unauthorised to partner (but authorised to declarer)
  - ▶ When it has been played the circumstances under which it was created is unauthorised to partner (but authorised to declarer)
  - ▶ If declarer has been damaged due to assistance from the penalty card while on the table then he can call the director and ask for an adjusted score

### Comment

The last covers situations where defenders can count the hand/ points etc and thus work out a better defence etc.

## Law 51 - Two or more penalty cards

- ▶ Previously you had to demand or forbid a lead in a suit in which there was a penalty card
- ▶ Now you can decide to let the offender's partner lead any card and the 2 (or more) penalty cards remain on the table.

There follows various laws on leads out of turn, premature leads and revokes - all of which should be dealt with by calling the director who will explain the position.

## Law 65 - Arrangement of Tricks

- ▶ B3 A player may draw attention to a card pointed incorrectly but this right expires when his side leads or plays to the following trick. If done later law 16B (extraneous information from partner) may apply.

### Comment

Previously declarer had the right to do this at any time and defenders lost the right when a card was led to the next trick (thus this change increases the correction period for defenders when the declaring side leads).

Presumably when the right expires this becomes a 'may not' law, meaning a penalty may be applied. Note that if dummy corrects a card pointed incorrectly by declarer after the right has expired then law 16B will apply to declarer.

## Law 66 - Inspection of tricks

- ▶ B Until his side has led or played to the next trick, declarer or either defender may inspect, but not expose, his own last card played

### Comment

This used to be 'until a card is led to the next trick' - the effect is that your right to look at your last card extends a bit further if the other side lead.

And now to the single most significant changes to the 2007 laws with regard to permitted procedures.

## Law 68 - claim or concession of tricks

- ▶ C A claim should be accompanied at once by a clear statement of the line of play or defence through which the claimer proposes to win the tricks claimed, including the order in which the cards will be played. The player making the claim or concession faces his hand.

### Comment

This is now a formalised correct procedure - there are usually no penalties for not making a statement as prescribed (it is a 'should' statement) and no penalty for not facing the hand (a 'does' statement) - but remember that any doubtful points will be adjudicated against the claimer if the claim is disputed and IF the director is then called. ????? IF ?????

- ▶ D After any claim or concession, play is suspended

What on earth has happened to 'PLAY CEASES'??????

## Law 68D - Suspension of play

- ▶ 1 If the claim/ concession is agreed then law 69 applies - no change there.
- ▶ 2 If it is doubted by any player, dummy included then EITHER
  - ▶ A) The director is immediately summoned and no action should be taken pending his arrival (he applies law 70) OR
  - ▶ B) On request of the non-claiming or non-conceding side play may continue subject to the following
    - ▶ All four players must concur (otherwise A applies)
    - ▶ The prior claim or concession is void and not subject to adjudication. There is no unauthorised information and exposed cards are not penalty cards and the score obtained subsequently will stand.

### Comment

Although the Director must apply law 70 if summoned, whilst players are getting used to the new rule, as a director I would explain the consequences of both options before proceeding.

Play is only suspended, not ended. This means that Dummy is still bound by the rights and limitations regarding drawing attention to irregularities etc. (Laws 42 and 43). (There is now no 'Play Ceases' statement. Probably both law 69 and law 70 should have included it - for completeness.)

## Law 73 - Communication, Tempo and Deception

- ▶ B Players shall not communicate... by questions asked or not asked, or alerts and explanations given or not given
- ▶ E A player may appropriately attempt to deceive an opponent through a call or play (so long as the deception is not emphasised by unwonted haste or hesitancy....)

### Comment

B - this extends the restriction, previously it was only to opponents

E - thinking before doubling (for example) in an attempt to make opponents think you are unsure about your double, and thus less likely to run and more likely to redouble is not allowed.

## Law 74 - Conduct and etiquette

- ▶ A2 A player should avoid any remark or **extraneous** action that might cause annoyance....

If an opponent does a double squeeze on myself and partner, this line of play might cause me annoyance - they got a good score. However I NOW have no cause to complain. (Under the old laws, technically I could)

Similarly I cannot now complain if my partner makes a stupid call, like taking out a penalty double....

## Law 75 - Mistaken Explanation or Mistaken Call

- ▶ A A player must carefully avoid taking any advantage from an explanation that a call has been incorrectly interpreted.
- ▶ C If a mistaken call is correctly explained, the explanation must not be corrected immediately and there is no obligation to do so subsequently

### Comment

This tidies up matter - If you make a call that you thought showed hearts and your partner says it showed spades - **and you realise he was correct**, then you mustn't say "Oh I meant hearts" - that is unauthorised information and you need not say "When I made the call I thought I was showing hearts" at the end of the auction.

## Law 79 - Tricks Won

- ▶ Subject to approval of the Tournament organiser, a scoring error may be corrected after expiry of the correction period, if the Director is satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the record is wrong.

### Comment

Previously, if you found out that a wrong score had been entered when you checked your results, and the correction period (usually 30 minutes after end of the session) had expired, you could only have your score corrected if the conditions of contest issued by the Tournament Organiser permitted it. Now if you can persuade the Tournament Organiser and the Director that the result was wrong, it may now be corrected.

(This change resulted from a couple of high-profile tournaments where the incorrect scores affected the overall winners - but the conditions of contest did not permit the results to be changed.)