

# Duplicate Decisions



## A Club Director's Guide for Ruling at the Table

*Revised September 2020*



American Contract  
Bridge League

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**Note 1:** Direct quotes from the 2017 version of the “Laws of Duplicate Bridge” and other sources are used throughout this book, in italics and/or enclosed with brackets. The commentary on the Laws and examples provided strive to be gender neutral whenever possible.

**Note 2:** The current edition of Duplicate Decisions was written according to the ACBL Alert Procedures, ACBL Convention Charts, WBF Commentary on the 2017 Laws of Bridge and other regulations valid circa May 2020.

**Note 3:** Online play is not addressed in the “Laws of Duplicate Bridge” and is not addressed in Duplicate Decisions. Rulings need be made in a way to accommodate the applicability of the Laws to the situation (or lack of applicability), and to the specifics and peculiarities of the online platform in use. ACBL regulations include a document, “Appendix O”, which addresses some but not all issues of online play. This can be found on the Conditions of Contest page on the ACBL website (ACBL.ORG).

# INTRODUCTION TO THE 2017 LAWS OF DUPLICATE BRIDGE

*[Duplicate Bridge is continually evolving and changing which is why the World Bridge Federation has charged its Laws Committee with the task of “at least once each decade making a comprehensive study and updating of the entire laws structure.”*

*This latest review, begun some five years ago, is the most comprehensive to date. Suggestions and comments were sought from interested individuals and National Bridge Organizations and Zones.*

*After these were all collated they were considered by the Committee in depth with the relevant law, which then was either amended or left alone. The discussions occurred at a number of WBF Championships and some thousands of emails were exchanged over a five-year period.*

*The purpose of the Laws remains unchanged. They are designed to define correct procedure and to provide an adequate remedy for when something goes wrong. They are designed not to punish irregularities but rather to rectify situations where non-offenders may otherwise be damaged. Players should be ready to accept graciously any rectification, penalty, or ruling.*

*Begun in 2007, the trend to give Tournament Directors more discretion in enforcing the Law has been continued and attempts have been made to clarify interpretations. The Committee intends to prepare a separate official Commentary containing examples to help in this respect.*

*Established usage has been retained regarding “may” do (failure to do it is not wrong), “does” (establishes procedure without suggesting that violation be penalized), “should” do (failure to do it is an infraction jeopardising the infractor’s rights but not often penalized), “shall” do (a violation will incur a penalty more often than not), and “must” do (the strongest word, a serious matter indeed). Again “must not” is the strongest prohibition, “shall not” is strong, but “may not” is stronger – just short of “must not”.*

*For the avoidance of doubt, this Introduction and the Definitions that follow form part of the Laws.*

*Finally, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise, the singular includes the plural, the masculine includes the feminine, and vice versa.]*

## CHAPTER I - DEFINITIONS

**Adjusted score:** *A score awarded by the Director (see Law 12). It is either “artificial” or “assigned.” An artificial adjusted score is, for example, “Average Plus.” An assigned adjusted score is a score that corresponds to a contract and a number of tricks, for example “4♠ by North = 420 NS.”*

**Alert:** *A notification, whose form may be specified by the Regulating Authority, to the effect that opponents may be in need of an explanation.*

**Artificial call:** *1. A bid, double or redouble that conveys information (not being information taken for granted by players generally) other than (or in addition to) a willingness to play in the denomination named or last named. 2. A pass which promises more than a specified amount of strength. 3. A pass that promises or denies values other than in the last suit named.*

**Auction:** *1. The process of determining the contract by means of successive calls. It begins when the first call is made. 2. The aggregate of calls made (see Law 17).*

**Bid:** *An undertaking to win at least a specified number of odd tricks (tricks in excess of six) in a specified denomination.*

**Board:** *1. A duplicate board as described in Law 2. 2. The four hands as originally dealt and placed in a duplicate board for play during a session (also referred to as a “deal”).*

**Call:** *Any bid, double, redouble or pass.*

**Canceled:** *See “Withdrawn.”*

**Contestant:** *In an individual event, a player; in a pair event, two players playing as partners throughout the event; in a team event, four or more players playing as teammates.*

**Contract:** *The undertaking by declarer’s side to win, at the denomination named, the number of odd tricks specified in the final bid, whether undoubled, doubled or redoubled (see Law 22).*



**Deal:** 1. The distribution of the pack to form the hands of the four players. 2. The cards so distributed considered as a unit, including the auction and play thereof.

**Declarer:** The player who, for the side that makes the final bid, first bid the denomination named in that last bid. He becomes declarer when the opening lead is faced (but see Law 54A when the opening lead is made out of turn).

**Defender:** An opponent of (presumed) declarer.

**Denomination:** The suit or no trump specified in a bid.

**Double:** A call over an opponent's bid increasing the scoring value of fulfilled or defeated contracts (see Laws 19A and 77).

**Dummy:** 1. Declarer's partner. He becomes dummy when the opening lead is faced and ceases to be dummy when play ends. 2. Declarer's partner's cards, once they are spread on the table after the opening lead.

**Event:** A contest of one or more sessions (synonym of "tournament").

**Note:** In the ACBL, a tournament usually comprises one or more events.

**Extraneous:** Not part of the lawful procedures of the game.

**Follow Suit:** Play a card of the suit that has been led.

**Game:** 100 or more trick points scored on one deal (see Law 77).

**Hand:** The cards originally dealt to a player or the remaining portion thereof.

**Honor:** Any ace, king, queen, jack, or 10.

**Infraction:** A player's breach of law or of lawful regulation.

**International Matchpoint (IMP):** A unit of scoring awarded according to a schedule established in Law 78B.

**Irregularity:** A deviation from correct procedure inclusive of, but not limited to, those which involve an infraction by a player.

**Lead:** *The first card played to a trick.*

**LHO:** *Left-hand opponent.*

**Matchpoint:** *A unit of scoring awarded to a contestant as a result of comparison with one or more other scores (see Law 78A).*

**Misinformation:** *The failure of a side to accurately disclose partnership method or understanding, as and when required by law or regulation.*

**Odd trick:** *Each trick to be won by declarer's side in excess of six.*

**Opening lead:** *The card led to the first trick. The opening lead is always made by a defender*

**Opponent:** *A player of the other side; a member of the partnership to which one is opposed.*

**Overtrick:** *Each trick won by declarer's side in excess of the contract.*

**Pack:** *The 52 playing cards with which the game is played.*

**Partner:** *The player with whom one plays as a side against the other two players at the table.*

**Partscore:** *90 or fewer trick points scored on one deal (see Law 77).*

**Pass:** *A call specifying that a player does not, at that turn, elect to bid, double or redouble.*

**Penalty** (see also "Rectification") : *Penalties can be of two kinds: 1. disciplinary — those applied for the maintenance of courtesy and good order (see Law 91), and 2. procedural — those (additional to any rectification) awarded in the Director's discretion in cases of procedural irregularities (see Law 90).*

**Penalty card:** *A card subject to disposition under Law 50.*

**Play:** *1. The contribution of a card from a player's hand to a trick, including the first card, which is the lead. 2. The aggregate of plays made. 3. The period during which the cards are played. 4. The aggregate of the calls and plays on a board.*

**Play period:** Commences when the opening lead on a board is faced. Contestants' rights and powers in the play period each expire as the relevant law provides. The play period ends when the cards are removed from their slots on the subsequent board (or when the last board of a round is quitted).

**Premium points:** Any points earned other than trick points (see Law 77).

**Presumed declarer:** The player, who in the absence of an irregularity, would become declarer.

**Psychic call** (commonly “psych[e]” or “psychic”): A deliberate and gross misstatement of honor strength and/or of suit length.

**Note:** A deviation of, for example, one point or one card is not considered a psychic call (it is not a gross misstatement). Also, an opening of 1♥ holding ♠ - ♥AKJ ♦AJ76432 ♣732 because the player had two diamonds sorted with the hearts is not a psychic call (it was not a deliberate misstatement).

**Rectification:** The remedial provisions to be applied when an irregularity has come to the Director's attention.

**Redouble:** A call over an opponent's double, increasing the scoring value of fulfilled or defeated contracts (see Laws 19B and 77).

**Retracted:** See “Withdrawn.”

**Revoke:** Failure to follow suit in accordance with Law 44. The failure to lead or play, when able, a card or suit required by law or specified by an opponent when exercising an option in rectification of an irregularity also constitutes a revoke. It's a common misbelief that a “revoke” is exclusively the failure to follow suit. The definition points to a number of other situations that constitute revokes.

**Example:** Declarer requests a spade from LHO after an opening lead out of turn, and LHO has spades in their hand but plays a diamond.

**RHO:** Right-hand opponent.

**Rotation:** *The clockwise progression of the normal turns to call or play; also the clockwise order in which, one at a time, the cards are recommended to be dealt.*

**Round:** *A part of a session played without progression of players.*

**Session:** *An extended period of play during which a number of boards, specified by the Tournament Organizer, is scheduled to be played. May have different meanings as between Laws 4, 12C2, and 91.*

**Side:** *Two players at a table who constitute a partnership against the other two players.*

**Slam:** *A contract to win six odd tricks (called small slam) or to win seven odd tricks (called grand slam).*

**Sorted deck:** *A pack of cards not randomized from its prior condition. A deck is designated as “sorted” if it wasn’t shuffled before the cards are dealt, not just when the cards have been arranged according to suits (as in the case of a brand-new deck of cards).*

**Suit:** *One of four groups of cards in the pack, each group comprising 13 cards and having a characteristic symbol: spades (♠), hearts (♥), diamonds (♦), clubs (♣).*

**Team:** *Two or more pairs playing in different compass directions at separate tables but for a common score. Applicable regulations may permit teams of more than four members.*

**Tournament:** *A contest of one or more sessions (synonym for “Event”).*

**Note:** In the ACBL, a tournament usually comprises one or more events.

**Example:** A sectional (tournament) might comprise four events of Open Pairs and one of Open Teams.

**Trick:** *The unit by which the outcome of the contract is determined, composed unless flawed of four cards, one contributed by each player in rotation beginning with the lead.*

**Trick points:** *Points scored by declarer’s side for fulfilling the contract (see Law 77).*

**Trump:** Each card of the denomination named in a suit contract.

**Turn:** The correct time at which a player is due to call or play.

**Undertrick:** Each trick by which declarer's side falls short of fulfilling the contract (see Law 77).

**Unintended:** Involuntary; not under control of the will; not the intention of the player at the moment of his action.

**Visible:** A card held such that its face may be seen by either an opponent or by partner.

**Vulnerability:** The conditions for assigning premiums and undertrick penalties (see Law 77).

**Withdrawn:** Actions said to be "withdrawn" include actions that are "canceled" and cards that are "retracted."

# CHAPTER II - THE BASICS

## 1 - The Pack

*[A. Rank of Cards and Suits: Duplicate Bridge is played with a pack of 52 cards, consisting of 13 cards in each of four suits. The suits rank downward in the order spades (♠), hearts (♥), diamonds (♦), clubs (♣). The Cards of each suit rank downward in the order Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2.]*

No result achieved with a pack of 52 cards is ever to be considered valid if the pack does not conform to the specification of this Law (even when the discrepancy appears to be irrelevant, such as there being two ♣2's but no ♣3).

*[B. The Face of the Cards: The Regulating Authority may require the face of each card to be symmetrical.]*

*[C. The Backs of the Cards: The backs of all 52 cards in a deck should be identical. They may incorporate words, a logo or a pictorial design but the image used should possess a center of symmetry.]*

This law specifies that the reverse side of the playing cards should be symmetrical (the back of the cards should look the same when pointing up or down). Although non-symmetrical backs are becoming rare, there are still significant quantities around. Clubs should avoid them and, when renewing stocks, substitute them with decks that have symmetrical backs. The WBF Laws Committee also recommends the use of symmetrical card faces.

If a player receives unauthorized information because of card symmetry issues, the Director could award an adjusted score using Law 12.

**Example:** If a player notices that the different backs are all one suit and gets a count on the hand because of that, this constitutes

unauthorized information, and the Director should act accordingly (and replace the deck if at all possible).

When the Director is informed that a deck is missing one or more cards, they must either locate the exact cards missing from that same deck or substitute a new deck. Adding a card to complete the deck is a bad practice because the missing card(s) may reappear, such as by coming unstuck, thereby creating a deck with too many cards.

## 2 - The Duplicate Boards

Whenever the dealer and/or vulnerability markings are other than specified in this Law, the actual markings are to be deemed correct for that session. In other words, the Director's ruling is based on the actual "VUL" (or red pockets) and "Dealer" markings on the board. A correctly marked board should be furnished for the next session. Directors should be lenient with players that fail to notice the difference and act "as they know it is supposed to be."

**Example:** Board 1 is wrongly marked as "Dealer South." North opens the bidding out of turn because they "know" that Board 1 is "Dealer North." The Director could treat this as a bid out of turn because for this session Board 1 will be "Dealer South" as marked, but is it the player's mistake or the organizer's responsibility? A better approach would be to apply the Law but treat North as a non-offender (possibly giving a split score to NS and EW), and warn the other players in the tournament that Board 1 is wrongly marked and to play it as it is marked.

## 3 - Arrangement of Tables

*[Four players play at each table, and tables are numbered in a sequence established by the Director. He designates one direction as North; other compass directions assume the normal relationship to North.]*

It is recommended that the tables be set square to each other to eliminate as much as possible the chance of hands being visible at adjoining tables. More tables will fit into the same space by placing them corner to corner in a diagonal pattern. This latter setup may be considered for Swiss team events as long as the same match is not played at adjoining tables, a setup that should always be avoided.

The North direction should be the same for all tables set in the same pattern to each other.

## 4 - Partnerships

*[The four players at each table constitute two partnerships or sides, North-South against East-West. In pair or team events the contestants enter as pairs or teams respectively and retain the same partnerships throughout a session (except as authorized by the Director). In individual events each player enters separately, and partnerships change during a session.]*

Except for newcomer events (open to players with less than 20 masterpoints), as noted in the next paragraph, the Director is prohibited from permitting a “three-player pair” to participate. The Director may, however, authorize a change in the composition of a pair or pairs during a session (for example, in case of an emergency). If this happens, specific regulations may apply in terms of masterpoint eligibility, qualifications for stages ahead, or other.

*[ACBL Handbook: At the discretion of club management, three-member pairs may participate in newcomer games. The club will apportion earned masterpoints among the three players in a ratio that approximates the number of boards each played. For example, a pair consisting of newcomer players A, B, and C finishes first in a newcomer game where each member of a two-member pair is entitled to .40 masterpoints, or .80 masterpoints for the pair. In this three-member pair, however, A, B, and C split .80 masterpoints according to the number of boards each played.]*



In a teams event, the pairs within a team can change according to the Conditions of Contest (usually after each match), and teams of four, five or six players may be permitted.

In some events, like single-session board-a-match teams, or compact knockouts, only teams of four are allowed, and changes of composition within a pair might be allowed or not, depending on the characteristics of the event.

In an individual event, the contestants enter as individuals, and the composition of the pairs will change with each round, according to the schedule used by the Director.

## 5 - Assignment of Seats

*[A. Initial Position: The Director assigns an initial position to each contestant (individual, pair or team) at the start of a session. Unless otherwise directed, the members of each pair or team may select seats among those assigned to them by mutual agreement. Having once selected a compass direction, a player may change it within a session only upon instruction or with permission of the Director.]*

### **Examples:**

1. It is not allowed to switch between East and West halfway through a session.
2. During a pairs event, the East player saw some cards from North by accident. For that board only, the Director should rotate positions, so that the East player will have North's cards.
3. A player sitting South is in a wheelchair and would rather sit in North's place because of being constantly disturbed by the movement of other players. The Director has two choices: Rotate the table positions 180 degrees, so that South maintains their compass position but physically sits where North was sitting before or, preferably, allow South and North to switch places.

The Director is responsible for clearly announcing the instructions regarding the movement of players between rounds. Each player is responsible for moving according to the instructions and being correctly seated for each round.

Players should check if they're seated correctly and against the right opponents before starting each round. If a player or pair is seated at the wrong table or direction, the Director must be notified as soon as the mistake is discovered. Depending on the form of the game and the moment when the error is noticed, the result on boards already finished or in play may or may not stand. If the director needs to make any score adjustments, the player or pair in the wrong place shall be considered the offending player(s).

**Example 1:** In a Howell, two pairs play half the round in the wrong direction (North-South is East-West and vice-versa). The comparison of scores is valid. The Director will have to move some matchpoints after the game is over, or, if using scoring software like ACBLScore, edit the movement to reflect how the boards were actually played during that round. No need for any procedural penalties (unless the mistake was intentional).

**Example 2:** During round seven, a pair sits at the wrong table and starts playing a board. Law 15B applies, and the solution depends on whether the pair had already played that board or not. If there are scores to be canceled, adjusted scores will be awarded. Only the pair that was wrongly seated is considered the offending side (even if their opponents should have checked who they were supposed to play against). A procedural penalty might be issued if the Director judges it appropriate.

In a pairs event when pairs are North-South in some round(s), and East-West in other(s), like in a Howell movement, each player should pick one compass position to play for each direction (e.g., North and East).

In a team event, players normally choose where they will sit for each match (for this purpose each match is considered to be a session) unless there are specific regulations regarding seating assignments. If a disagreement arises, and the regulations do not cover the situation, there

are two choices. Either a coin flip (the team that loses the flip will sit first, in the positions assigned, and the winner sits around their opponents) or a blind line-up (each team writes their sitting on a piece of paper without knowing the other team's line-up).

## **CHAPTER III - PREPARATION AND PROGRESSION**

### **6 - The Shuffle and Deal**

*[A. **The Shuffle:** Before play starts, each pack is thoroughly shuffled. There is a cut if either opponent so requests.]*

*[B. **The Deal:** The cards must be dealt face down, one card at a time, into four hands of thirteen cards each; each hand is then placed face down in one of the four pockets of the board. No two adjacent cards from the deck shall be dealt into the same hand. The recommended procedure is that the cards be dealt in rotation, clockwise.]*

The existence of several dealing “styles” is recognized, as long as no two adjacent cards are dealt into the same hand.

**Example:** Dealing cards one at a time into four piles alternating left-to-right and right-to-left is not allowed because the far left and far right piles receive two consecutive cards at a time.

There may not be a redeal because no player has bid (see Law 22B). One reason for this is that players evaluate their hands differently, so someone else will probably open. “Passed out” is a valid bridge result and the comparison might produce a good result for one of the pairs.

*[C. **Representation of Both Pairs:** A member of each side should be present during the shuffle and deal unless the Director instructs otherwise.]*

If the Director is standing near a table where one pair wants to shuffle and the other has not arrived yet, the Director may allow the shuffle while they are supervising the table.

No result may stand if the cards are dealt without a shuffle from a sorted deck or if the deal was already played in a different session (unless the purpose of the game is to replay past deals).

If it is found out before the start of the auction (before a call is made), the first time that a board is played, that the cards were misdealt or a player could have seen the face of a card belonging to another player, there shall be a new shuffle and deal.

After that, if the sighting was accidental, Law 16D (extraneous information) applies. If because of a player's own error, the face of one or more cards becomes visible before the auction starts (and the board has already been played by other contestants), the resulting information is authorized for the opponents. If the partner could have seen the card(s), the information is unauthorized for them, and Law 24 applies.

**Example:** Because of someone opening a window, a card flies from a player's hand, and lands face up on the table. The exposure is accidental. If it happens before the auction has started for the first time that the board is played, reshuffle and redeal. If it happens later, the sight of the card is unauthorized information for everybody. If the exposure of the card was due to a player's mishandling of their cards, even if involuntarily, the Director will usually rule that the exposure was not accidental, and will apply Law 16D, and possibly Law 24.

**Note:** When the hands have been pre-duplicated from a hand record, although the Director has the power to order a redeal if a card is exposed before the auction starts, they should normally not do so. Instead, they will deal with the situation as if it was not the first time that the board was played.

The Director can order a new shuffle and deal for any reason consistent with the Laws.

**Example:** During a KO match, if pairs at one table sit in the wrong directions, that segment of the match will be replayed immediately (even if this is inconvenient to the teams) provided there is enough time prior to the start of the next session. If time does not permit replaying

the full segment, then as many boards as can reasonably be played must be played.

There are additional options for the shuffle and deal besides handling it at each table before play starts. The Director can perform the shuffle and deal themselves, in advance, or have other agents do it, or require other methods of dealing as long as the expected randomness of the hands is achieved.

**Note:** Having a duplicating machine to prepare the hands from a hand record is an example of “other methods” to achieve this purpose.

## **7 - Control of Boards and Cards**

*[A. Placement of Board: When a board is to be played it is placed in the center of the table where it shall remain, correctly oriented, until play is completed.]* To prevent fouled boards, the board must not be moved after the players have taken their cards out of the pockets until the end of play.

*[B. Removal of Cards from the Board:*

- 1. Each player takes a hand from the pocket corresponding to his compass position;*
- 2. Each player counts his cards face down to be sure he has exactly thirteen; after that, and before making a call, he must inspect the faces of his cards;*
- 3. During play each player retains possession of his own cards, not permitting them to be mixed with those of any other player. No player shall touch any cards other than his own (but declarer may play dummy's cards in accordance with Law 45) during or after play except by permission of an opponent or the Director.]*

Although Law 7B1 does not mention this explicitly, no player should remove their cards from the board before at least one member of the opposing pair arrives. Each player shall count their cards face down to make sure that they have thirteen. Before making a call, each player

must inspect the faces of their cards (bidding “sight unseen” or “without looking at one’s cards” is not allowed).

Contrary to some widespread convictions, there is no rigid rule regarding whether, at a slow table, a board has to be completed once it is started, or whether it should be removed if not started at all. The director should use their judgment, taking into account the players involved, the movement, the conditions of play, etc.

After a board is played, a player may look at a hand if either opponent agrees or if the Director allows it. When there is an objection, the Director may choose to answer the opponent’s questions concerning the hand rather than allow the opponent to “see” it.

*[C. Returning Cards to Board: After play has finished, each player should shuffle his original thirteen cards, after which he restores them to the pocket corresponding to his compass position. Thereafter no hand shall be removed from the board unless a member of each side, or the Director, is present.]*

When removing and restoring cards, contestants are equally responsible for seeing that they have 13 cards.

**Note:** The players should shuffle their cards even if the hand is passed out, so as not to give the next table any unauthorized information from the order in which the cards were played or placed in the pocket.

When an irregularity occurs at a table (e.g., a person removed an incorrect hand), the Director should ascertain who was at fault and issue a procedural penalty. If a board is played with the compass points pointing in the wrong direction (e.g., the North player plays the South hand), the result is valid, and the board should be scored as it is played. If a board is played pointed 90° from the correct position in a Howell or Mitchell movement (North-South play the East-West hands), the result should be scored as it is played. The comparison groups change, but this does not invalidate the results. If this occurs on an early board of a set, the Director should permit that board to be completed and then turn the remaining board(s) to the correct position for the remainder of that

round. In both cases, the Director should be watchful that the players return the cards to the board in the correct positions.

If a board is played 90° from the correct position during a team game, if the board was already played at the other table of the same match, Law 86 applies (a direct comparison is no longer possible). 86A allows the Director to order a redeal (the most frequent situation), and 86B1 covers the situation when the result at the other table was clearly favorable to one of the contestants. If the board was not played at the other table, the Director will allow the rotated board to be completed and make sure that it is played equally rotated at the other table, to obtain a valid comparison.

*[D. Responsibility for Procedures: Any contestant remaining at a table throughout a session is primarily responsible for maintaining proper conditions of play at the table.]* This means, among other things, avoiding the mixing of cards from two hands, removing extraneous items from the table, etc. In a Howell, it might be North-South, East-West, or nobody.

This provision does not mean that non-stationary players are not responsible; it just means that stationary players are more responsible than the others.

**Example:** The board is put on the table in the wrong position, and East takes out South's cards. All players are deemed responsible.

## 8 - Sequence of Rounds

*[A. Movement of Boards and Players:*

- 1. The Director instructs the players as to the proper movement of boards and progression of contestants;*
- 2. Unless the Director instructs otherwise, the North player at each table is responsible for moving the boards just completed at his table to the proper table for the following round.]*

*[B. End of Round: 1. In general, a round ends when the Director gives the signal for the start of the following round; but if any table has not completed play by that time, the round continues for that table until there has been a progression of players; 2. When the Director exercises his authority to postpone play of a board, for that board the round does not end for the players concerned until the board has been played and the score agreed and recorded or the Director has canceled the play of the board.]*

*[C. End of Last Round and End of Session: The last round of a session, and the session itself, ends for each table when play of all boards scheduled at that table has been completed, and when all scores have been entered without objection.]*

It's important to know the time limits for a round and a session because they affect the application of some laws.

**Examples:** Law 64B5 states that there is no automatic trick adjustment for a revoke if attention is first called after the round ends. Law 69A specifies that a claim is agreed upon when the opponents assent to it and raise no objection before the round ends.



## CHAPTER IV - GENERAL LAWS GOVERNING IRREGULARITIES

### 9 - Procedure Following an Irregularity

Any player may try to prevent another player from committing an infraction or irregularity (dummy is subject to some limitations, see Laws 42 and 43).

*[A. Drawing Attention to an Irregularity: 1. Unless prohibited by Law, any player may draw attention to an irregularity during the auction period, whether or not it is his turn to call; 2. Unless prohibited by Law, declarer or either defender may draw attention to an irregularity that occurs during the play period. (...)]*

Dummy may not call attention to an irregularity until after the play of the board is concluded (with the exception of correcting declarer's mistaken explanation of a call, Law 20F5).

**Note:** Once the irregularity happens, it goes without saying that it can no longer be prevented.

**Example:** Declarer starts pulling a card to lead from the wrong hand. Until the card is played, dummy may call their attention and prevent them from doing so. After declarer leads, dummy can no longer prevent the irregularity, because it already happened.

The right to draw attention to an irregularity may be restricted by a specific Law. For example, 65B states that dummy or a defender cannot draw attention to a quitted trick pointed incorrectly after a lead to the next trick has been made.

Except for correcting an apparently wrong explanation from partner (Law 20F5), *[A5. There is no obligation to draw attention to an infraction of law committed by one's own side.]*

***[B. After Attention Is Drawn to an Irregularity:]***

1. (a) *The Director should be summoned at once when attention is drawn to an irregularity.*
2. (b) *Any player, including dummy, may summon the Director after attention has been drawn to an irregularity. (...)  
No player shall take any action until the Director has explained all matters in regard to rectification.]*

***[C. Premature Correction of an Irregularity:]*** *Any premature correction of an irregularity by the offender may subject him to a further rectification. (...)]*

**Example:** When the opponents call the attention to an insufficient bid, the player should not replace it. If they do, Law 27C applies.

When attention was called to an irregularity, and the players did not summon the director immediately, even though Law 92 allows a player to ask for a ruling at a later time, the Director will often not give that player any redress because they are in breach of Law 9B1a. That would be the case, for example, if in the Director's opinion, the player could have expected that not calling the Director at the time might have been beneficial for their side.

**Example:** A defender plays out of turn before their partner. Declarer tells them to pick up the card and continue. Now the other defender finds the killing lead, and declarer calls for the Director. Declarer is not entitled to any redress (although the Director might apply Law 11A or 11B, if the circumstances are right, to correct the defender's score).

When an alleged irregularity comes to the Director's attention, they should usually deal with it when both sides are present. When asked for a late ruling (after a round has ended, for example), the Director should inquire about the reasons for the late request and ascertain that attention to the irregularity was not drawn at the time, or that new information came to the attention of the players involved. If the time delay is not too big, there should be no negative implications for the players involved.

**Example 1:** A player asks for a ruling about a revoke that occurred two boards earlier because they realized only then that the revoke had happened. New information came to light, and the Director should take the case.

**Example 2:** A player asks for a ruling because of an agreed hesitation that happened two boards earlier, and when asked why they did not call the Director at the time, they say that they were determining whether or not the hesitation made a difference for the auction. There is no issue with this. But if the call for this ruling happens 20 minutes after the end of the session, while the Director cannot refuse to rule (Law 92B), the delay is probably a good indication that the player is not convinced of their own argument.

Also, if because of a late application for a ruling it is no longer possible to establish the facts, then no ruling can be given.

## 10 - Assessment of Rectification

*[A. Right to Determine Rectification: The Director alone has the right to determine rectifications when applicable. Players do not have the right to determine (or waive – see Law 81C5) rectifications on their own initiative.]*

*[B. Cancellation of Enforcement or Waiver of Rectification: The Director may allow or cancel any enforcement or waiver of a rectification made by the players without his instructions.]*

If the players have made their own ruling, the Director will not change the agreed result if:

1. the correct ruling was made, and
2. all participants were aware of their rights, and
3. a correct rectification (or lack thereof) was applied.

If ANY of the three is lacking, however, the Director can change the result.

When the Laws provide an option, the Director must fully explain all the options available (and the consequences).

**Example:** After a lead out of turn, the Director should NOT say, “Do you accept the lead?” before explaining all the options and implications.

When a player has the right to select an option, they may not consult with their partner.

It is entirely appropriate for the innocent side to select the most advantageous option available. Also, after rectification is assessed, it is appropriate for the offending side to make any call or play that is advantageous for their side, even if they seem to profit from the infraction (subject to Laws 16C2, 27 and 72C).

**Note:** Law 12A allows the Director considerable leeway for adjusting a score when there is an infraction not specifically covered by the Laws, like gaining by making your own ruling.

## 11 - Forfeiture of the Right to Rectification

*[A. Action by Non-Offending Side: The right to rectification of an irregularity may be forfeited if either member of the non-offending side takes any action before summoning the Director. If a side has gained through subsequent action taken by an opponent in ignorance of the relevant provisions of the law, the Director adjusts only that side’s score by taking away any accrued advantage. The other side retains the score achieved at the table.]*

**Note:** This Law applies when either side may have gained an advantage through subsequent action taken by an opponent. The Director removes the advantage gained by that side and keeps the score for the other side, creating a split score (both sides losing). The relevant laws are still applied to the side committing the irregularity.

**Example:** A defender drops an honor on the table. Declarer tells the defenders: “Don’t worry, it’s just a penalty card,” and the card stays on

the table with no call for the Director. A few tricks later, declarer calls the Director when the partner of the player with a penalty card ends up on lead, to enforce the lead restrictions. The defenders now say that if they knew about lead restrictions, they would have defended differently and maneuvered to have the penalty card played earlier without any consequences (which is true). The Director deals with the penalty card, giving declarer their options, and then applies Law 11A. The defending side will get the table score, and the declaring side will get an adjusted score based on what would have happened if the Director had been summoned when the irregularity occurred.

*[B. Penalty after Forfeiture of the Right to Rectification: Even after the right to rectification has been forfeited under this Law, the Director may assess a procedural penalty (see Law 90).]*

## 12 - Director's Discretionary Powers

*[A. Power to Award an Adjusted Score: On the application of a player within the period established under Law 92B or on his own initiative the Director may award an adjusted score when these Laws empower him to do so (in team play see Law 86B). (...)]*

There are numerous circumstances where the Laws tell the Director that they should adjust the score.

**Example:** Law 64C states that the Director should adjust the score in favor of the non-offending side if, after an established revoke, the automatic trick adjustment does not provide enough compensation for the damage caused by the revoke.

When the appropriate Law provides for rectification (or states that there is to be no rectification), the Director may not adjust the score, even if it seems that “equity” would be achieved through an adjustment. Also, the fact that the rectification specified by the appropriate Law might seem unduly severe or advantageous to either side is not grounds for a score adjustment. The Director must give the correct book ruling, and not “tweak the rules” because they seem to be unfair.

**Example:** Defending against 7♦, a player commits a revoke, and later on their partner wins a trick with the ♦A (the only trick for the defense). The “book ruling” for this simple revoke is a one-trick transfer, and 7♦ is made. The Director cannot rule that “the “revoke caused no damage because the declarer could never win the contract”!

Law 12A specifically allows the Director to adjust the score of a hand:

*A1 – [(...) in favor of a non-offending contestant when he judges that these Laws do not prescribe a rectification for the particular type of violation committed.]*

**Example:** In a match between good players, it is known from the auction that declarer has ten cards in trumps between their hand and the dummy. Declarer plays a trump. LHO holds K5 and revokes. After their partner plays the Ace, they now announce the revoke and show the 5 of trumps. The Director might give the benefit of the doubt to the player, but even so, this is a case for applying Law 12A1. Could LHO be revoking in order to discover if partner had the A singleton?

*A2 – [(...) if no rectification can be made that will permit normal play of the board (see 12C2)]*

In this case, the Director will frequently assign an artificial adjusted score, like Ave+, Ave or Ave-.

**Example:** Auction goes 1♥ Pass Pass Pass / 1NT Pass Pass Pass, and the hand is played out in 1NT. After scoring the result, someone notices the oddness of the auction and calls the Director. 12A1 only applies in favor of the non-offending side. 12A2 is the right Law to apply here. There is no rectification that might permit the normal play of this board, and even if it would be possible to determine what would happen in 1♥, the Law mandates an artificial adjusted score. As both sides are offenders, the score should be Ave- for both.

*A3 – [(...) if there was an incorrect rectification of an irregularity.]*

**Example:** The Director forgets to apply Law 26 (Lead Restrictions) after an insufficient bid is replaced with a non-comparable pass

(Law 23), and the offenders end up defending. Realizing their mistake after the hand is over, the Director should apply 82C (Director's Error) and adjust the score, treating both sides as non-offenders, which will likely result in a split score.

The general objective of a score adjustment is to redress any damage to the non-offending side and to take away any advantage gained by the offending side through the infraction. Damage exists when an innocent side obtains a table result less favorable than if the infraction had not occurred.

Note that to determine damage, a hand must be played out, and a result obtained.

**Example:** A player incorrectly explains their partner's bid, and this causes the opponents to go astray in the bidding. The Director is called after the opening lead. As we cannot go back to the auction (Law 41C), the Director will instruct the players to continue playing and call them back after the play if there is damage (even if the Director already knows the answer). Note that even after instructing the players, it is a good practice to go back to the table after the play and ask them if they feel damaged or not.

Many Laws specify the correct procedure but do not offer specific penalties for violation.

**Examples:** A player may not inspect a quitted trick; a player may not handle an opponent's cards; a review of the auction must be given by an opponent of the player requesting it. Most often, this type of irregularity does not cause damage. The offending side might be liable to a procedural penalty (Law 90), but the innocent side is not entitled to redress because there is no damage to redress. However, if there is damage (*e.g.*, declarer may have made the contract because of the illegal inspection of a previous trick), the Director has the authority to assign an adjusted score under Law 12.

**Note:** Damage must be a result of the infraction.

If there is an infraction and damage as a consequence of an infraction, the Director will normally award an adjusted score. If the Director is able to award an assigned adjusted score, they will do so. An artificial adjusted score should be considered a last resort.

In awarding an adjusted score, the Director should seek to recover as nearly as possible the probable outcome of the board (what would have happened without the infraction). It is proper to weigh different possibilities to reflect a number of potential results.

**Example:** North-South are bidding hearts and East-West spades. After 4♥ by South, there is a long hesitation by West and East bids 4♠, which goes down one. The 4♠ bid was clearly suggested by the hesitation. The Director decides to adjust the score, but 4♥ might make or go down, on a pure 50% guess. The Director could adjust the score, 50% of the time 4♥ making, and 50% of the time 4♥ down one, if 4♠ down one by the offenders is worse for the non-offenders.

It's a good practice (recommended also by the WBF Commentary to the 2017 Laws) to tilt the weights under 12C1c towards the non-offending side. For the example above, it would be best to assign a weight of 60% to 4♥ making and 40% to 4♥ down one.

**Note:** Assuming a generic decision to assign X% of the time result A and (100-X)% result B, in matchpoints, the weighted score will be X% of the matchpoints of result A, and (100-X)% the matchpoints of result B. It is wrong to weight the results directly (X% times A plus (100-X)% times B). For the example above, let's assume that 4♥= by NS is worth 12 MPs, 4♥-1 by NS is worth 2 MPs and 4♠-1 by EW is worth 4 MPs. The Director will assign a score of  $0.5 \times 12 + 0.5 \times 2$  MPs, or 7 MPs, to NS.

If the event is run in IMPs, then the weighted score is calculated directly in IMPs, instead of matchpoints.

Only outcomes achieved in a legal manner can be included in the weighted calculation.



**Example:** NS are in an uncontested auction. Before bidding 4♠ South hesitates for a long time and North drives to slam, which makes. The Director consults with some players, and they all say that South's hesitation suggests bidding on, and that passing 4♠ is a logical alternative, but half of them say that they would bid on anyway with the North hand. The Director decides to adjust the score. In considering the weights to be assigned to different outcomes, it is not legal to give any weight to a player's choice of an illegal alternative (Law 16D1 states that a player may not choose a call (or play) that is demonstrably suggested over another by unauthorized information if the other call (or play) is a logical alternative. The score in this example should, therefore, be adjusted to 4♠+2.

Sometimes, there are too many outcomes possible. In this type of situation, when the Director decides to adjust a score, they may decide for an artificial adjusted score instead. This should not be used by the Director as an "easy way out" to avoid committing time and effort applying 12C1(a), (b), (c). An artificial adjusted score in place of a bridge result should always be seen as a last resort.

*[12C2a. When owing to an irregularity no result can be obtained [see also C1(d)] the Director awards an artificial adjusted score according to responsibility for the irregularity: average minus (at most 40% of the available matchpoints in pairs) to a contestant directly at fault, average (50% in pairs) to a contestant only partly at fault, and average plus (at least 60% in pairs) to a contestant in no way at fault.]*

An artificial adjusted score in IMPs translates to 3 IMPs (Ave+), 0 IMPs (Ave), -3 IMPs (Ave-). The scores awarded to the two sides need not balance.

*[12C2e. If, subsequent to the irregularity, the non-offending side has contributed to its own damage by an extremely serious error (unrelated to the infraction) or by a gambling action, which if unsuccessful it might have hoped to recover through rectification, the offending side is awarded the score it would have been allotted as the consequence of*

*rectifying its infraction and the non-offending side does not receive relief for such part of its damage as is self-inflicted.]*

Players will get redress for damage that is the result of an opponent's infraction (consequent damage) but not damage that is self-inflicted through an extremely serious error and unrelated to the infraction (subsequent damage). Also, players will not get redress for so-called "gambling actions".

An extremely serious error must be unrelated to the infraction for redress to be denied by the Director. This includes blatantly bad calls or plays (like not cashing the setting trick playing IMPs), and failure to follow proper procedure (revoking, creating a penalty card, playing before partner in defense).

Judging an action as "gambling" is rare.

**Example:** A player making a highly speculative and unreasonable double after the infraction, hoping for redress if it doesn't work out.

The fact that without the infraction the contract would not be the same (the non-offending side would be declaring and not defending, for example) does not by itself mean that an extremely serious error is related to the infraction.

## 13 - Incorrect Number of Cards

**Note:** Law 13 only applies when 52 cards are distributed unevenly among the four hands, like when a player has 14 cards, and another has 12 (Law 13A, 13B, and 13D), or when there are more than 52 cards in play (Law 13C). When the board contains fewer than 52 cards, Law 14 applies.

If the Director discovers that the board was incorrectly dealt, they shall order the board redealt and cancel any previous results on the board.

When the irregularity is discovered, the first task of the Director is to restore the board to its proper state. For that, the Director should consult

with players who have previously played the board or check the hand record, if available.

If the irregularity is discovered before a player with an incorrect hand makes a call, and no player has seen a card belonging to another player's hand, the Director requires the board to be played normally.

When a player has seen one or more cards belonging to another player's hand, the Director corrects the board, and it is played and scored. There is no alternative (players don't have an option to cancel the board). In the end, if the Director considers that the extraneous information affected the result on the board, they adjust the score (see 12C1b) and may penalize an offender. The Director should take note of the auction and play in order to make an informed decision.

If a player with an incorrect hand has already made a call (Law 13B):

*[If the Director judges that the deal can be corrected and played, then the deal may be so played with no change of call. At the end of play the Director may award an adjusted score.*

*Otherwise when a call has been made with an incorrect number of cards, the Director shall award an adjusted score (see Law 12C1b) and may penalize an offender.]*

Note that this law applies even if the irregularity is discovered during the play. Also, and in conformity with the general philosophy of the Laws, the Director should strive to get a valid bridge result on the board before deciding to adjust the score, instead of canceling it outright.

**Example:** North has ♠AKJT ♥A98 ♦Q87 ♣K753 and is the dealer. They open 1NT (15-17). West now notices that they have only 12 cards and calls the Director. The extra card is the ♠K. After the hand is corrected, North knows where the ♠K is, and would not have opened 1NT. However, this does not necessarily mean that the result on the board will be affected. The auction might continue 1NT 2♣(majors) Pass 2♠ / All Pass.

The “normal” auction might have been 1♣ 1♠ Pass 2♠ / All Pass, for the same contract, and maybe the knowledge of the ♠K by North will not affect the result.

There are several “ifs” and “maybes” in this process, but if it is at all possible to get a normal bridge result, the Director should see to it. 12B2 should be applied rarely.

*[C. **Surplus Card:** Any surplus card not part of the deal is removed if found. The auction and play continue without further rectification. No adjusted score may be awarded unless such a card is found to have been played to a quitted trick.]*

If the extra card is found before played, it is removed, and the game continues. If it is found among played cards and the Director judges that the outcome on the board was affected by the play of the extra card, an adjusted score may be awarded. The Director should investigate the origin of the surplus card(s) because it might, for example, be a card from the next board, or a board on the previous round.

In the absence of hand records, if the Director cannot reconstitute the board (for example, because the players that already played the board cannot remember the position of the cards), there are some alternatives. In a team game, if the board has been played at the other table already, the Director may have the board redealt (time permitting) or canceled, and may penalize an offender if relevant.

**Note:** In a Swiss teams event when an offender is penalized the change of score does not accrue to the opponent’s score. For example, a match between Team A and Team B finished 22-7 (in IMPs) and Team A has a procedural penalty of 3 IMPs. The final score will be a win by 12 IMPs for Team A (19-7) and a loss by 15 IMPs for Team B (7-22).

*[D. **Play Completed:** When it is determined after play ends that a player’s hand originally contained more than 13 cards with another player holding fewer, the result must be canceled and an adjusted score awarded (Law 86B may apply). An offending contestant is liable to a procedural penalty.]*

In this case there is no option in the Laws but to cancel the result, award an adjusted score and penalize the offender(s). However, in cases where the irregularity does not cause damage, the “adjusted” score will be the same as the one obtained at the table.

**Example:** West is the dealer. North has 14 cards and South 12. The auction proceeds 1NT Pass 3NT All Pass. After the lead, declarer immediately claims nine tricks. Defenders accept the claim, and everybody starts the next board. North now realizes that they had an impossible distribution and calls the Director. However, the Director does not have to give an artificial adjusted score automatically (13D only mentions an “adjusted score.”) If the Director is satisfied that North-South would always get the same four tricks, the “adjusted” score on the board will be the same as the one obtained at the table. The Director should give a procedural penalty to North-South for not counting their cards.

## 14 - Missing Card

Law 14 deals with situations where there are missing cards (51 cards or less in one board).

When one hand is deficient while the other three hands are correct, and this is discovered:

Before the play period begins: The missing card is restored to the deficient hand, or the Director reconstructs the deal to the original form using a new deck. The bidding continues without alteration of any of the calls made.

After the play period has begun: If the missing card is among the quitted tricks, this usually means that the player played two cards to the same trick. The Director requires the offender to restore to their hand the extra card played to the quitted trick. If only one card was faced, the faced card is left among the quitted tricks (Law 67 addresses Defective Tricks).

If the missing card is found (but not among the quitted tricks), it is restored to the player's hand. A card restored to a player's hand is deemed to have belonged to it continuously. Because of this, failure to have played it may constitute a revoke (subject to Law 64). The Director must check for this (during play, if the missing card is exposed, or after play otherwise).

**Example:** During play, North notices that they are missing a card. The Director determines the missing card to be the ♠2. After restoring the card to North's hand, the Director will have to determine if North failed to follow suit in spades. However, this is often better done after the play ends (otherwise the Director is giving the other players information about the extra card). Alternatively, the Director can check with North, away from the table, and confirm with the other players when possible. The extra card can also become a penalty card (Law 50). For example, this happens when the player is searching for it and exposes it inadvertently.

If the missing card cannot be found, the Director reconstitutes the deal with a new deck and proceeds as if the card was found but not in the quitted tricks. The Director should never add a new card to an old deck, because missing cards have the annoying tendency to reappear thereby producing a deck with an extra card (because of the card added to it when the original card went missing).

When it is found that dummy is missing a card (and it is not among quitted tricks), if that card should have been played earlier in order to follow suit, failure to have played it constitutes a revoke. (Yes, dummy CAN revoke!) However, there is no automatic transfer of tricks (Law 64B3). Law 64C, however, requires the Director to restore equity if the non-offenders were damaged by the revoke from dummy (if they got a worse result than they would have achieved had the revoke not occurred).

Also if there is no revoke from dummy, if the missing card goes unnoticed for some time and its absence is found to have damaged the defenders (for example, if they would have defended differently), an

adjusted score (Law 12) may be appropriate for failing to display dummy properly (Law 41D).

When a player, usually the dummy, says, “Everyone is responsible for the dummy,” the response should be that some are more responsible than others. This statement is an “urban myth” and has no basis in the Laws. The player who is the dummy is responsible for the proper display of their hand.

## 15 - Wrong Board or Hand

Law 15A deals with the situation where a player makes a call with the cards from the wrong board (like when everybody has the cards from board 11 except this player, who kept their cards from board 10).

Law 15B deals with the situation where players start a board not designated for them to play during this round (like when a pair sits at the wrong table and starts the auction).

**15A:** If a player is holding cards that they picked from a wrong board and makes a call, that call (and any subsequent call) is canceled. If their partner subsequently called, the board cannot be salvaged. The Director awards an adjusted score (no option here). Note that the Director does not need to give an artificial adjusted score. An assigned score is preferable, if possible. If the offender’s partner has not called yet, the offender looks at the correct hand and calls again. The auction proceeds normally from this point on, but Law 16C (Information from Withdrawn Calls and Plays) applies.

**Example 1:** South has the hand from the previous board and opens 1♥. The Director is called. 1♥ is canceled, South picks up the correct cards, and the auction starts again. The meaning of 1♥ is irrelevant for this auction (the bid was made with a hand that does not belong to this board).

**Example 2:** Same setting but after 1♥ West overcalls 1NT before attention is called to the irregularity. 1♥ and 1NT are canceled, South

picks up the correct cards, and the auction starts again. The meaning of 1♥ is again irrelevant. The information regarding 1NT is authorized for East-West (the non-offenders) but unauthorized for North-South (the offenders).

**Example 3:** Same setting again. This time the auction starts with 1♥ 1NT and North passes before attention is called to the irregularity. The hand is canceled (no other option).

If the offender was holding the cards from a board that will still be played (for example, the next board), then if they repeat the same call on the board from which they initially drew the cards the Director may allow the board to be played normally but will adjust the score if the second call differs from the original canceled call. A substitute call is deemed different if its meaning is much different or if it is a psych.

**Example:** Three-board rounds, South holds the cards from board 15 and all other players' cards are from board 14. Board 14 is on the table. East opens 1♠ and South overcalls 2♥. The Director is called and rules on board 14. Before board 15 starts, the Director explains to South the implications of this Law, as explained above. South now opens 1♥. The Director can let the auction continue normally. The meaning of a 2♥ overcall is not much different from an opening of 1♥. But if South had opened 2♥ then the Director would cancel the board and award an adjusted the score, because a 2♥ opening (weak) is much different from a 2♥ overcall.

Note the importance of explaining to the player that one does not have to repeat the call to avoid an adjustment; one must make a comparable call (see Law 23).

**Example:** North and East have the cards from board 14, South and West from board 15. South passes, and the Director is called. Which board is in play, 14 or 15? If the tray on the table is number 15, then board 15 is in play (even if one could argue that the players at the table were trying to play board 14 initially). North and East pick up their cards for board 15, and the auction continues without further penalty. If the tray on the table is number 14, then South and West pick up the cards from 14.



South's call is canceled, the auction starts with East, and if South passes on their first round, the auction continues normally.

The Director may always assess a procedural penalty to the offender(s), on top of any rectifications (depending on the situation in hand, there might be one or two offending pairs).

**Law 15B:** In a Pairs event, if the Director discovers after the start of the auction period (see Law 17A) that a pair is playing a board not designated for them to play in the current round, then:

1. If the board has already been played by any of the players at the table (with or without the correct opponents), the board is canceled for both sides. Example: Pairs 1 and 2 should be playing, but pair 3 is wrongly seated, and everybody is holding their cards on the first board. The auction period has started already (Law 17A). If pair 3 played this board before, the board is canceled for pair 1. It will also be canceled for pair 2. There is no option to try to salvage a result. If only players from pair 3 had cards in their hands when the Director was summoned, then the auction period would not have started yet for pair 1 (Law 17A), and in this case the Director would seat the correct pair at the table and let the board be played normally.
2. If the board has not been played by any of the players at the table, then the auction and play will continue without correcting the seated pairs. The score stands. This doesn't work out very well if the pair seated incorrectly is not scheduled for the board at all. Note that with this new 2017 approach, there will be two pairs that have to wait for the board to be finished and might not have time to complete their round. Example: Pair 1 should be playing the board against pair 2, but pair 3 sits and starts just like above. Neither 1 nor 3 have played the board yet. The board is played through, score stands, pair 2 will not be able to play this board and gets Avg+. Pair 3 would often be playing this board later against another pair. This other pair will also get Avg+, for being deprived of the opportunity to get a valid score on the board. Note that the Director may require both pairs to play the correct board against one another later.

In a Barometer contest (everybody plays the same boards on each round), we consider a pair seated at a wrong table still to have played the right boards, and in this case the TD may deal with the issue in any sensible way (for example, letting the waiting pairs play against each other for one board).

*[ACBL Conditions of Contest: In a Swiss Teams or a Knockout event, if a board not scheduled to be played is played, the board is not counted (even if played at both tables), independently of the score. Depending on when the irregularity is discovered and on time available, the correct board should be played, or the match scored with one board less.]*

The Director should warn the North-South or stationary pair for not verifying the opponents' pair number. If the Director has previously warned the pair or feels that the pair has been particularly negligent, they could award a procedural penalty (1/4 of a board seems adequate).

## **16 - Authorized and Unauthorized Information**

[16A

1. A player may use information in the auction or play if:
  - a) it derives from the legal calls and plays of the current board (including illegal calls and plays that are accepted) and is unaffected by unauthorized information from another source; or
  - b) it is authorized information from a withdrawn action (see C); or
  - c) it is information specified in any law or regulation to be authorized or, when not otherwise specified, arising from the legal procedures authorized in these laws and in regulations (but see B1 following); or
  - d) it is information that the player possessed before he took his hand from the board (Law 7B) and the Laws do not preclude his use of this information.

2. Players may also take account of their estimate of their own score, of the traits of their opponents, and any requirement of the tournament regulations.]

**Extraneous Information from Partner:** *[16B1. Any extraneous] (not part of the lawful procedures of the game) [information from partner that might suggest a call or play is unauthorized. This includes remarks, questions, replies to questions, unexpected alerts or failures to alert, unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement or mannerism.]*

*[16B1a. A player may not choose a call or play that is demonstrably suggested over another by unauthorized information if the other call or play is a logical alternative]*

**Logical Alternative:** *[16B1b. A logical alternative is an action that a significant proportion of the class of players in question, using the methods of the partnership, would seriously consider, and some might select.]*

The use of the word “DEMONSTRABLY” is intended to remove from consideration logical alternatives that are not suggested over another by the unauthorized information. The Director should not change a result unless the action chosen can be shown (demonstrated) to have been suggested. The actions that will be removed by Law have to be suggested in an obvious, easily understood way – it must be readily apparent rather than a product of some subtle bridge argument.

*[16B2. When a player considers that an opponent has made such information available and that damage could well result he may announce, unless prohibited by the Regulating Authority (which may require that the Director be called), that he reserves the right to summon the Director later (the opponents should summon the Director immediately if they dispute the fact that unauthorized information might have been conveyed).]*

If the director is called before the recipient of the unauthorized information takes action, they should instruct the recipient that they

cannot choose an action demonstrably suggested by that information, if there are logical alternatives. Note that this is not the same thing as “ignoring the information.” As long as there are logical alternatives, calls or plays suggested by unauthorized information are not allowed, even if those calls or plays are majority actions (actions that a majority of players would take). Then, the Director will ask for the auction and play to continue and instruct the non-offenders to call them back after the play if they feel that they might have been damaged.

*[16B3. When a player has substantial reason to believe that an opponent who had a logical alternative has chosen an action suggested by such information, he should summon the Director when play ends. The Director shall assign an adjusted score (see Law 12C1) if he considers that an infraction of law has resulted in an advantage for the offender.]*

Note that in this situation calling the Director before or later than after the end of play is not an infraction.

When a player makes available unauthorized information (through a hesitation, for example), no infraction has occurred yet. Thinking in and of itself is not an infraction. The infraction occurs when their partner chooses an action that is demonstrably suggested by the hesitation when other logical alternatives exist.

A frequent case is when there is a lack of an alert, an unexpected alert, or an alert and an explanation that is not according to what the player expected.

**Example:** East opens 1NT, and South overcalls 2♦ (showing hearts or spades). North alerts and explains the call as “diamonds and another suit.” For South this is unauthorized information, independently of it being the correct system agreement or not. For all purposes, South must continue as if North explained 2♦ as “one major.”

If the Director is called before the end of the play, they should collect as many facts as possible, and let the hand develop until a score is achieved before deciding if the non-offenders were damaged by the unauthorized

information or not. When the play finishes, the Director should **always** go back to the table and ask the non-offenders if they feel damaged in any way. If they say “no” at this time, it will be hard for them to claim damage further down the road (unless new facts come to light), and this way the Director will not be confronted with this type of dialog:

“What’s the decision on our case?”

“You didn’t call me back, I thought you were ok.”

“We didn’t know that we had to call you back.”

Recommended steps in dealing with unauthorized, extraneous information such as tempo variation (*e.g.*, huddles).

1. Was there unauthorized information available? Was there a huddle? **If yes, proceed.**
2. Were the opponents damaged? **If yes, proceed.**
3. Were there logical alternatives to the call chosen by the partner of the huddler? (Remember that a logical alternative is a call that, among the class of players involved, would be given serious consideration by a significant number of such players.) **If yes, proceed.**
4. Could the extraneous information demonstrably suggest the call chosen over a likely less successful logical alternative(s)? Is it obvious? Is it readily apparent? Is it easily understood? **If yes, proceed.**
5. Assign an adjusted score.

**Information from Withdrawn Calls and Plays (16C):** All information arising from a withdrawn action is authorized for a non-offending side, and unauthorized for an offending side. A player of an offending side may not choose a call or play that is demonstrably suggested over another by unauthorized information if the other call or play is a logical alternative. The Director shall assign an adjusted score (see Law 12C1) if they consider that a violation of this restriction has damaged the non-offending side.

**Note:** A remarkable exception to this general rule is when there is an insufficient bid corrected with the lowest bid that shows the same denomination as per Law 27B1a, which states explicitly that Law 16C does not apply. In this case, a fail-safe provision is added (27D) to allow the Director to adjust the score in some situations where the non-offending side is damaged. Another exception is when an out-of-rotation or an insufficient call is withdrawn and substituted with a comparable call (Law 23).

***[16D Extraneous Information from Other Sources:***

1. *When a player accidentally receives extraneous information about a board he is playing or has yet to play, as by looking at the wrong hand; by overhearing calls, results or remarks; by seeing cards at another table; or by seeing a card belonging to another player at his own table before the auction begins (...), the Director should be notified forthwith, preferably by the recipient of the information.*
2. *If the Director considers that the information would likely interfere with normal play he may, before any call has been made:*
  - a) *adjust the players' positions at the table, if the type of contest and scoring permit, so that the player with information about one hand will hold that hand;*
  - b) *if the form of competition allows of it order the board redealt for those contestants;*
  - c) *allow completion of the play of the board standing ready to award an adjusted score if he judges that the extraneous information affected the result;*
  - d) *award an adjusted score (for team play see Law 86B).*

*(...)]*

**Unauthorized information from a traveling score slip, or from overhearing a result:** In all situations dealing with the unauthorized information obtained by seeing a traveler from another board, or overhearing a result, the Director must determine whether or not the information gained is sufficient to affect the bidding or play of the hand. In almost all cases, this offense will require an adjusted score. The

Director should talk with the players that received unauthorized information, away from the table, and ask them what information they got. Then, allow the auction and play to begin, reserving the right to assign an artificial adjusted score if the Director finds that the unauthorized information has influenced the result. It is possible the North player may have seen the results but be holding a hand where they would neither enter the auction nor be involved in the play (*e.g.*, East and West may have a cold game with South making a standard opening lead). Or, South may have heard that NS can make some contract, and it turns out that the information was about some other board.

**Example:** North calls the Director and tells them that they heard that NS could make 5♠, likely on one of the boards they are about to play. The Director instructs the table to play and watches carefully. Turns out that in no auction on that round were spades even remotely considered at the game level. Almost certainly there is some other board during the event where NS can bid and make 5♠... Score stands.

The Director should always try to get a valid result on a board and assign an adjusted score (assigned or artificial) only as a last resort.

**Polling players:** To help in deciding matters of judgement, the Director can (and should, whenever possible) elicit the help of players. Note, for example, the definition of “logical alternative.” How can the Director decide if players of the same class would seriously consider, or choose, a given action? The easiest way is to ask such players about it. During a club event this will often not be easy, but if a Director has a network of contacts available (friends, acquaintances, willing players, other Directors), they can use a multitude of sources to ask for advice about a hand: phone, social networks, etc. The pollees do not replace the Director in deciding if a certain call is a logical alternative, for example, or if it is demonstrably suggested by a break in tempo, but their input is invaluable for the Director’s thought process. Also, the quality of the final decision is vastly improved when players of an adequate level are consulted. When polling, the Director should try to gather unbiased opinions. For that reason, the Director should not mention the irregularity at the start of the poll.

**Example:** North has ♠ A987 ♥ Q432 ♦ 432 ♣ J3. East opens 1NT (15-17), South huddles for a while, and passes. West passes. North bids 2♣ (showing the majors). The auction continues with Pass, 2♠, All Pass. West leads, and when dummy comes down EW call the Director, questioning North's bid after South's break in tempo. The Director should proceed like this:

1. How long did South think about their call? Players will often say that they didn't "hesitate," but instead "thought for a while" because "after all, this is a thinking game." Establish an opinion about the break in tempo from talking to the players.
2. Collect the auction, explanations, etc. Let the play continue and advise EW to call back if they feel damaged.
3. After the play, EW call back. 1NT would make eight tricks, and 2♠ went down one for what seems to be a poor score.
4. Was there damage? Apparently so.
5. Were there any logical alternatives for North? Ask players.
6. "You have this hand. Auction goes 1NT 15-17, Pass Pass to you. What is your bid? Did you consider any other calls?"
7. Could the break in tempo suggest the call made by the player? Within the same poll,
8. "If your partner thinks for a while before passing, what does it suggest?"
9. Think about the information received. Probably several players will choose to pass, and all of them will say that the hesitation implies that partner has values, suggesting to partner: "Do something other than pass." However, if the Director started the poll with "Auction goes 1NT, partner thinks for a while and passes," their opinions would be tainted by this extra bit of information, and the poll would be fatally skewed.



## CHAPTER V - THE AUCTION

### 17 - The Auction Period

The auction period on a deal begins for a side when either partner withdraws their cards from the board. The auction itself starts with the first call and ends when all four players pass, or when three consecutive passes in rotation have followed a call. The auction period ends when either defender faces an opening lead. If the lead is out of turn, see Law 54.

**Note:** When the presumed declarer or dummy decides to “lead” prematurely after the auction is finished, that does not end the auction period. This situation is not covered in the Laws (Law 24 only covers the case when a card is exposed or led during the auction). It seems reasonable to just let the card be picked up (the defenders just got the benefit of a glimpse at one of the opponent’s cards).

The player designated as dealer makes the first call (17B), and thereafter each player calls in turn, clockwise (17C). If a call out of rotation happens, Laws 28-32 apply.

When using bidding boxes, special regulations apply:

*[ACBL Bidding Box Regulations: A player is obligated to choose a call before touching any card in the box. Deliberation while touching the bidding box cards may subject the offending side to the adjustment provisions of Law 16.]*

*A call is considered made when a bidding card is removed from the bidding box and held touching or nearly touching the table or maintained in such a position to indicate that the call has been made.]*  
For close cases, the Director should probably judge that the definition above was not met.

*[The onus is on the player to convince the director that a mechanical irregularity has occurred. Calls from different pockets should rarely, if at all, be judged as inadvertent.]*

When the director rules that a call has **NOT** been made because the player's actions did not meet the standard for that purpose, he should inform the table that those actions constitute unauthorized information for his partner.

All calls should be placed on the table in the same manner, each call overlapping the previous call in a regular and uniform way.

The criterion for when a call is made is very similar to the one used to decide if a card by declarer is played.

When a player removes an inadvertent call from the bidding box, due to a "slip of the finger," such a call is deemed inadvertent and does not carry any information, authorized or not (see Law 25A). However, this is a judgment matter for the Director.

A call from a different pocket is almost never inadvertent (it's difficult to believe that a player, intending to bid 1NT, pulled a Pass instead). Sometimes the player will allege that it was a mechanical mistake but what they mean is that, in their mind, they "would never bid that," but careful investigation and an inspection of the hand may show otherwise.

**Example 1:** North opens 1NT with ♠AK8753 ♥KJT9 ♦Q9 ♣8. The hand itself is telling the Director that the player wanted to open 1♠ and pulled the card just next to it by mistake.

**Example 2:** North opens 1♠ with ♠ AK87 ♥ KJT9 ♦ Q98 ♣ K8 and claims that they always intended to bid 1NT. The Director should at least investigate if North did not happen to have a club mixed in with the spades by accident (in which case 1♠ would not have been inadvertent).

The interval between the end of the auction and the end of the auction period is called the Clarification Period (see Law 41B).

Law 21 allows the Director, before the opening lead is faced, to cancel a final pass by the non-offenders in the situation where there has been misinformation, such as a failure to Alert, and that pass may have been based on misinformation. The bidding reverts to the last pass by the

non-offending side, and if any call other than a pass is made, the bidding continues. Otherwise, the opening lead is faced, and the auction is over.

**Note:** Any time a non-offender has made an opening lead, and the choice of lead might have been based on misinformation, the lead may be changed without penalty, but only if no card belonging to dummy's hand has yet been exposed. The Director may adjust the score at the conclusion of play if they deem the misinformation damaged the defenders in either the bidding or on the opening lead.

*[17D3. When a call has been followed by three passes the auction does not end if any of those passes was out of rotation, depriving a player of his right to call. When this occurs, the auction reverts to the player who missed his turn, all subsequent passes are canceled and the auction proceeds normally. Law 16C applies to the canceled calls, any player who has passed out of rotation being an offender.]*

17D3 deals with a very specific situation and supersedes any more general Law that might seem to apply in this kind of situation. Let's take, for example, an auction that goes like this:

|      |     |      |      |
|------|-----|------|------|
| N    | E   | S    | W    |
| 1♣   | ... | Pass | Pass |
| Pass |     |      |      |

(South's call was out of rotation). As per Law 17D3, the auction is NOT over, because one of the three passes was out of rotation, depriving East of their right to call. When this occurs, the auction reverts to the player who missed their turn (East), all subsequent passes are canceled, and the auction proceeds normally. The player that passed out of rotation is considered the offender (Law 16C applies to the canceled passes). In this case, the information from the passes would be authorized for EW and unauthorized for NS.

The same principles would apply if the auction was

|      |      |     |      |
|------|------|-----|------|
| N    | E    | S   | W    |
| 1♣   | Pass | ... | Pass |
| Pass |      |     |      |

In this case, only the two last passes are canceled, the auction reverts to South, and the offender is West.

## 18 - Bids

*[A. Proper Form: A bid designates a number of odd tricks (tricks in excess of six), from one to seven, and a denomination. (Pass, double and redouble are calls but not bids.)]*

Utterances such as “one ...” do not constitute bids. Law 16, Unauthorized Information, is used to deal with this type of situation.

Maybe the offender made it obvious (e.g., “One hear...”), but in no case should the Director ever require that they name a denomination or otherwise complete the “bid.”

Law 18 also defines what is a “sufficient” bid (a bid with the same number of odd tricks, but in a higher denomination, or a bid with a higher number of odd tricks), and an “insufficient” bid (quite simply, a bid that is not sufficient).

## 19 - Doubles and Redoubles

**Definition of a legal double:** *[19A1. A player may double only the last preceding bid. The bid must have been made by an opponent, and no calls other than pass may have intervened.]*

**Definition of a legal redouble:** *[19B1. A player may redouble only the last preceding double. The double must have been made by an opponent, and no calls other than pass may have intervened.]*

An inadmissible double or redouble is rectified by applying Law 36. A double or redouble out of rotation is rectified by applying Law 29 (which will often lead to Law 32).

## Proper method of doubling/redoubling

1. [19A2/19B2. In doubling/redoubling, a player should not state the number of odd tricks or the denomination. The only correct form is the single word "Double"/ "Redouble".]
2. [19A3/19B3. If a player, in doubling/redoubling, incorrectly states the bid, or the number of odd tricks or the denomination, he is deemed to have doubled/redoubled the bid as it was made. (Law 16 Unauthorized Information may apply.)]

**Example:** A player says, "I double 4♠" when the bid was 4♥, they have doubled 4♥. Further, their partner has received unauthorized information. If their partner takes an action based on that information, Law 16 should be applied.

3. An analogous principle applies when using bidding boxes. When a player doubles, they are deemed to have doubled the last bid made, even if they thought that they were doubling another contract.

**Example:** The auction starts with 1♠ Pass 3♠ Double. The player that doubled calls the Director, saying that they thought they were doubling 2♠. The double of 3♠ stands (and it was NOT inadvertent, so Law 25A cannot apply).

4. It is highly improper for partners to communicate through the manner in which calls or plays are made and through extraneous remarks or gestures. It is a breach of Law 74 for players to use different designations for the same call. The only correct form is the word "double" (or "redouble"). Expressions like "I will double this" and "I double you" have no place in modern bridge.

## 20 - Review and Explanation of Calls

Right to review a call, a bid or the auction

[20A. A player may require clarification forthwith if he is in doubt what call has been made.] This does not depend on the player's position relative to the call. ANY player can ask for clarification as long as they do so immediately. However, players must be aware that asking might produce unauthorized information. If the player does not immediately

ask for clarification, they must, at their turn to call, ask for a complete review of the auction and listen to all of it (not just the call that was misheard).

*[20B. During the auction period, a player is entitled to have all previous calls restated when it is his turn to call, unless he is required by law to pass. Alerts should be included when responding to the request. A player may not ask for a partial review of previous calls and may not halt the review before it is completed.]*

With bidding boxes in use, the player usually looks at the auction sequence on the table. Each person is responsible for making sure that their calls are clearly visible. If a call is not visible, and that causes damage to the opponents, the Director may have to adjust the score via Law 12C1.

*[20C1. After the final pass either defender has the right to ask if it is his opening lead. (...)]* Law 47E states that a lead out of turn may be retracted without penalty if the leader was mistakenly informed by an opponent that it was their turn to lead.

**Note:** When a player asks if they are on lead, doesn't get an answer, and leads anyway, 47E does not apply.

*[20C2. Declarer or either defender may, at his first turn to play, require all previous calls to be restated. (See Laws 41B and 41C). As in B the player may not ask for only a partial restatement or halt the review.]*

Declarer or either defender may, at their first turn to play, require such a review. Also, after a face-down opening lead, their partner can ask for a review of the auction. Declarer's first turn to play is from dummy (except when accepting a lead out of turn).

**Procedure for Review:** *[20D. A request to have calls restated shall be responded to only by an opponent.]*

**Correction of Error in Review:** *[20E. All players, including dummy or a player required by law to pass, are responsible for prompt correction*

*of errors in restatement (see Law 12C1 when an uncorrected review causes damage).]*

**Note:** When confronted with a situation where the players do not agree about the way the auction proceeded, the Director should try to establish as best as possible what calls are agreed to by everyone.

*[ACBL Office Policy: In cases where there is no evidence to the contrary TDs should rule in agreement with the "speaker". This would apply to cases where it is 2 to 2 or 1 to 1. Where all the other players (excepting the "speaker") have given SOME indication that they thought the "speaker" said something else, TDs should rule with the majority. In cases that are 2 to 1 it is material to which side the one abstaining belongs. When the "speaker's" partner abstains, there should be a slight tendency to rule with the majority. When it is a member of the other side abstaining, there should be a marked tendency to rule with the majority.*

*These are guidelines. Whenever there is substantial evidence, TDs should rule with the evidence. Committees have purview as these matters are questions of fact.]*

The Director should allow the bidding to proceed, if applicable. They may later need to award an adjusted score (Law 12C1) if the failure to correct the review (or a faulty correction) caused damage.

**Example:** West is on lead against 4♠. After the lead, South asks for a review of the auction. Everybody agrees that the auction started as

| N    | E    | S    | W    |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1♠   | 2♥   | 3♠   | Dbf  |
| Rdbl | 4♦   | Dbf  | Pass |
| 4♠   | Pass | Pass |      |

However, there is now disagreement about West's final call. West maintains that they doubled, South says that West passed, East and North don't remember. One little trick that often unblocks these situations is to ask the other players what their last action was. Did East pass two times during the auction? Did North pass at any moment? Does anybody remember seeing South pass a second time? Who was the first

player to pick up their bidding cards? It is the Director's job to try to get to a determination of facts and, with the weight of evidence he is able to collect, reach a decision on what might have happened based on the balance of probabilities, and consequently assign a specific score. However, the unfortunate Director will sometimes get stuck with two sides absolutely convinced that they are right about their version of the auction, no way to reconcile both and no evidence to support one version over another. As a last resort, a Solomonic ruling might be in order, in this case (each side gets the worst score). Supposing that 4♠ makes, for NS the score would be 4♠ not doubled making, and for EW 4♠ doubled making. If 4♠ goes down one, NS gets 4♠X-1, and EW 4♠-1. This alternative should be avoided if at all possible, and only be used when the Director does not see any indications at all pointing to either version of the facts.

In no circumstances should the director be tempted to give both sides what they are claiming happened, i.e., a good score to both sides.

### **Explanation of opponents' calls:**

1. During the auction and before the final pass, any player at their own turn to call may ask for an explanation of the opponent's auction (unless required by Law to pass). Also, after a face-down opening lead, leader's partner and/or declarer may ask for and receive a review of the bidding or an explanation of the opponent's auction. Replies should be given by the partner of the player who made the call in question unless the Director instructs otherwise. If the partner does not remember the meaning of a call, they should not try to guess. "I don't remember" should prompt the Director to establish whether or not an agreement actually exists, and in that case send them away from the table and ask the bidder to explain. If the player says something like "I don't think that we ever discussed this," it seems that there is probably no agreement, and the explanation that the opponents are entitled to is: "Undiscussed."
2. If the partner of the player that asks a question has additional questions, they must wait for their turn to ask them.



3. When asking about the opponent's auction, a player is entitled to know about calls actually made, relevant alternative calls available that were not made, and about inferences from the choice of action where these are matters of partnership understanding. The right to ask additional questions does not extend to sequences that are irrelevant for the current auction.  
**Example:** The auction goes 1♠ Pass 3♣. The next player checks the opponents' convention card for the meaning of the jump raise to 3♣ and can ask about alternative raises. However, they cannot, for example, ask if the partnership uses 3- or 4-card Drury because that is irrelevant for this auction.
4. After the final pass and throughout the play period, declarer or either defender at their own turn to play may request an explanation of the opponent's auction. Declarer can also ask for an explanation of the defender's card play understandings. As in #1 above, the explanations should be given by the partner of the player whose action is to be explained.
5. When explaining the meaning of partner's call or play in reply to an opponent's inquiry, a player should disclose all special information conveyed to them through partnership agreement or partnership experience, but need not disclose inferences drawn from general bridge knowledge and experience.
6. If the meaning has not been discussed, "no agreement" or "undiscussed" is the proper response. Players should not say such things as "I am taking it to mean ..." In addition, "standard" or the name of a convention is not a proper answer. Also, when a player explains a call as "undiscussed," it is improper to ask a question like "But what do you think that it is?" or similar.
7. Players should be aware that the content and manner of their questions may potentially create unauthorized information, even when the question is legal. Law 16, Unauthorized Information, may apply if, for example, a successful line of defense could have been suggested by a "not so smart" question. After an alert, for example, "please explain" is an adequate request for an explanation, but "What do you mean with 2♠?" is not. "Could I ask for a review of the auction?" is fine, but "What was the auction, did you really bid 3♣?" is not.

8. A player can ask about the meaning of a single call (one does not need to ask for the meaning of the whole auction), but again Law 16 may apply.
9. A player is entitled to ask about a call, or the auction, independently of what their action will be. “A player cannot ask about the auction if he is going to pass anyway,” is a common misconception. If this were true, then the act of asking or not asking would create information by itself (if the player asked, they would show an intention not to pass, even if in the end they decided to do so).

### **When things go wrong:**

1. A player realizes during the auction that their own explanation was wrong or incomplete. They must summon the Director before the end of the Clarification Period (before the opening lead is faced) and correct the mis-explanation. They may, but are not required to, correct it sooner than that. The Director will apply Law 21B or 40B3, depending on the situation.

**Note:** This is a major change from the 2007 Laws, when the player was required to immediately call the Director as soon as they realized their mistake. The fundamental reason for the change is to avoid giving the opponents the advantage of bidding with two sets of information (the correct meaning of the calls and the meaning that they have under the mis-explanation), because for the Director to decide if there is damage from a mis-explanation they have to judge what would have happened with the correct meaning only (Law 40B3).

2. A player realizes that their partner has given a mistaken explanation. During the auction, they may not correct the error nor indicate in any manner that a mistake has been made. The player must call the Director and inform the opponents that, in their opinion, their partner’s explanation was erroneous (see Law 75B) but only at the first legal opportunity, which is:
  - a) For a defender, at the end of the play.

- b) For declarer or dummy, after the final pass of the auction. ‘Mistaken explanation’ here includes failure to alert or announce as regulations require, or an alert (or an announcement) that regulations do not require.
3. A player is uncertain as to what is the correct partnership agreement. They may wait for the end of the hand and refer the matter for resolution to the Director (Law 20F6).
  4. A player realizes that their partner’s explanation is correct, but the bid was wrong. They do not need to mention it to the opponents because they are entitled to the correct agreements only. However, the player now has unauthorized information, and even if they genuinely found it out by themselves, and not because of partner’s explanation, they must not act on the unauthorized information (they must bid as if their initial understanding of their own call remained the same, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary).

**Example:** North bids 1♥. East bids 3♣, intending to show spades and diamonds, but West alerts as spades and clubs. East realizes that West is right but will have to continue the auction as if they never heard the explanation. For East, 3♣ will continue to show spades and diamonds; otherwise, they will be deemed to have been awakened by the unauthorized information.

5. When the Director judges that a player has based an action on misinformation provided by an opponent, they will apply Law 21 (for a call) or 47E (for a play).
6. If a player infers from information given by the opponents that they have had a misunderstanding, they are entitled to use that inference but at their own risk. Players are entitled only to correct explanations of the opponents’ partnership agreements.

**[20G. Incorrect procedure:**

1. *A player may not ask a question if his sole purpose is to benefit partner.*
2. *A player may not ask a question if his sole purpose is to elicit an incorrect response from an opponent.*

3. *Except as the Regulating Authority allows, a player may not consult his own system card and notes during the auction period and play (...).]* (Law 40B2b allows the declaring side to consult their own system card and notes during the Clarification Period).

A player may not ask a question with the intention of misleading the opponent (Law 73D2).

## 21 – Misinformation

*[21A. Call based on caller's misunderstanding: No rectification or redress is due to a player who acts on the basis of his own misunderstanding.]*

**Misinformation:** Misinformation is the failure to accurately disclose the partnership method or understanding, as and when required by law or regulation. Explaining a call in a way that is different from what is agreed by the partnership, or having the convention card mismarked, are two common forms of misinformation.

**Note:** When the call is explained correctly according to the partnership's system, even if the meaning does not conform with the hand because of a deliberate deviation or a mistaken call, there is no misinformation.

**Example:** After a 1NT opening, LHO overcalls 2♣ intending to show a major two suiter with ♠KJ987 ♥QJ8765 ♦5 ♣9. RHO explains (as per the convention card) 2♣ as a one-suiter (LHO forgot the system). LHO has unauthorized information, but there is no misinformation for the opponents (they got the correct explanation of the system).

If evidence to the contrary is absent, the Director should presume misinformation (mistaken explanation) rather than mistaken call (Law 21B1b).

**Note:** "Evidence to the contrary" can be information on the convention card, or within system notes, but the Director can gather that evidence from other sources as well. For example, the players allege that a certain

call, as explained, was used earlier in the session, and the Director can confirm that with their previous opponents. Evidence does not need to be in the form of printed materials.

When misinformation is present, a player must summon the Director.

Players who, by experience or expertise, recognize that their opponents have neglected to Alert a special agreement will be expected to protect themselves.

Opponents who actually know or suspect what is happening, even though not properly informed, may not be entitled to redress if they choose to proceed without clarifying the situation.

### **Call Based on Misinformation from an Opponent:**

*[21B1a. Until the end of the auction period (see Law 17D) and provided that his partner has not subsequently called, a player may change a call without other rectification for his side when the Director judges that the decision to make the call could well have been influenced by misinformation given to the player by an opponent. Failure to alert promptly where an alert is required (...) is deemed misinformation.]*

*[21B2. When a player elects to change a call because of misinformation (...), his LHO may then in turn change any subsequent call he may have made, but Law 16C applies.]*

### **Consider an auction such as:**

|    |    |    |      |
|----|----|----|------|
| N  | E  | S  | W    |
| 1♦ | 2♥ | 2♠ | Pass |

At this point, West suddenly remembers that 2♥ was a jump overcall showing hearts and spades. According to Law 20F4a, West must call the Director before the end of the Clarification Period (before the opening lead). If this West decides to immediately correct the failure to alert (which West is entitled to do), South will call the Director. As a matter of proper technique, the Director should try to avoid having players giving information to the table about their hands. In this case, the Director should avoid having South say something like “I would never

have bid 2♠ if I knew.” When West explains that they failed to alert, the Director should pull South away from the table and ask them privately if they would like to change their call.

When a player elects to change their call under Law 21B1a, the burden of proof regarding the reasons for the change falls on the player. A change of call is not allowed if there is no reason for it related to the misinformation.

*[2017 WBF Laws Commentary: While the player does not automatically get to change his call, he is not held to the same standard as with an Unauthorized Information case. After all, the player who was misinformed is the non-offender. In fact, he should be allowed the change if the second call fulfills the conditions for a logical alternative: i.e., if a significant proportion of the players would seriously consider the call and some would actually choose it.]*

In the case above, South says that they would like to double, meaning that they want to penalize at least one of the opponent’s suits (it’s not hard to imagine why). The Director returns to the table with South and allows them to change the call. West can now change their own Pass. However, because EW are the offending side, the withdrawn call is authorized information for NS and unauthorized information for EW (and if EW end up defending, there may be lead penalties according to Law 26).

**Note:** West may change their bid ONLY IF South changes theirs. If South does not change, West cannot change either.

Note that only the last call from the non-offending side can be changed (there is no “rolling back the auction” further than that). Taking the example above one step further,

| N  | E  | S  | W    |
|----|----|----|------|
| 1♦ | 2♥ | 2♠ | Pass |
| 3♣ |    |    |      |

Only now West remembers the correct meaning of 2♥ and calls the Director. Maybe North would not have bid 3♣ with the correct

information. This call may still be changed. However, South would most likely not have bid 2♠ to begin with, and this call can no longer be changed, because North has subsequently called.

The Director should now speak separately with each non-offender (and possibly with the offenders) away from the table to ascertain if they would have made different calls with the correct information.

When it is too late to change a call and the Director judges that the misinformation damaged the non-offending side, they award an adjusted score (Law 21B3). In our example, South states that they would have doubled instead of bidding 2♠. North will also probably say that they would have bid something else, but the Director will have to analyze what would have happened if South had doubled (what would be the likely final contract, and result). Law 12C1b. Note that the Director should not go to North before the end of the hand and ask what they would do if South doubled (that would be conveying unauthorized information).

Note also that it is improper procedure for players to change calls in failure-to-alert situations without first summoning the Director.

When there is misinformation, and it is too late to change a call (like the last example above, regarding 2♠), it is a bad practice for the Director to simply ask the players to call them back after the play if there is damage. The Director should ask the players what they would have done differently as early as possible. This will provide much better information for adjusting the score (or not) than if the questions are asked after the hand is over and all 52 cards are known. Also, when talking to a player that can still change their call, sometimes the player will say something like “I might double if I knew (...)” Because they can still change their call, the Director should make it clear that there will be no mulligans. As the player has the correct information now, they must make a decision.

Law 47E2 deals with the situations where a play (instead of a call) is made that was the result of misinformation.

## 22 - End of Auction

The auction ends when a legal call is followed by three consecutive passes in rotation. If no player has bid, the auction ends when all four players pass. The auction period ends when the opening lead is faced (Law 17). If no player bids, the auction period ends when all four hands are returned to the board. The interval between the end of the auction and the end of the auction period is designated as the Clarification Period.

**When a board is passed out:** A board may not be redealt because no player has bid. The hands are returned to the board. Players reshuffling a board without the permission of the Director, especially experienced players, may be penalized. One reason for this is that players evaluate their hands differently, so someone else will probably open. “Passed out” is a valid bridge result and the comparison might produce a good result for one of the pairs. Another reason, when hands are pre-duplicated and hand records available, is to have the hands in conformity with the records. And in a multi-section tournament that is scored across, the hand should be the same in all the sections.

## 23 - Comparable Call

The 2017 Law 23 is completely new and introduces the concept of a “comparable call,” essential for ruling on insufficient bids (Law 27) and calls out of rotation (Laws 28-32). When the illegal call is not accepted, if the substitute call is comparable to the withdrawn call, most of the time there will be no additional consequences for the offenders. The new law’s purpose is to increase the frequency of normal bridge results after insufficient bids and calls out of turn. Directors can be somewhat liberal and lenient when applying Law 23, in order to achieve this goal, but it must be recognized that in many situations no comparable call exists and the offender’s substitute call will bar partner for one round (after a call out of rotation) or the remainder of the auction (after an insufficient bid).



To decide if a call is comparable to a previous one, the intention of the player that made the illegal call is not relevant. What the Director needs to take into account are the attributable meanings of the withdrawn call, i.e., the possible meanings perceived by the offender's partner.

**Example:** A player bids 2♣ after an opening of 2♠ (weak) on their right. Assuming that the call was not inadvertent (see Law 25), from partner's point of view it could be a club overcall (thinking that the opening was 1♠) or a strong 2♣ opening (not realizing that RHO had opened). These are the "attributable meanings" of the insufficient 2♣ bid.

Talking to the offender away from the table is often useful for establishing the attributable meanings of the illegal call (one of those meanings is surely the one intended by the player).

*[23A: A substitute call is comparable to the withdrawn call if a) both have more or less the same meaning, or b) defines a subset of the meanings attributable to the withdrawn call, or c) has the same purpose as what is attributable to the withdrawn call.]*

Any of the three definitions in Law 23 may be used to rule a call comparable, but they are independent tests. They should not be mixed together in an attempt to find a way to allow a call as comparable. For example, 23A2 refers to a subset. Subset has a definite meaning: for a call to be defined as a subset, all the meanings of the replacement call must fit into the meaning of the withdrawn call. There is no such thing as "more or less similar to a subset."

The Director can use some discretion when judging if two calls have more or less the same meaning.

**Example 1:** Dealer's LHO opens 1NT (15-17) out of turn. Not accepted. Dealer opens 2♥ weak. Offender now bids 2NT (15-18). It does not have the same meaning, but it's similar, therefore comparable.

**Example 2:** North dealer, South opens 1♠. Not accepted. The auction restarts with Pass Pass 1♠. Most of the time the director will likely consider this to be a comparable call because it shows more or less the same type of hand. It's certainly within the spirit of "saving as many

boards as possible.” However, the director might consider it not comparable if the 1♠ opening in third position is unusually aggressive (♠ AKxx ♥ xxx ♦ Jxx ♣ xxx, for example, would be good enough) when compared to a 1♠ opening in first position (the pair’s style being 12+, for example).

Generally speaking, a call is considered similar to another if it is within 2-3 HCP. Small distributional differences between the withdrawn call and the replacement call are more problematic than strength differences.

**Example 3:** North dealer, South opens 1♥, not accepted. North now opens 1♠ and East overcalls 2♦. 2♥ should be ruled a comparable call for South under this section of the laws. The replacement bid and the withdrawn bid both show at least five hearts. While all hands that would bid 2♥ in a standard context would not necessarily have opened the bidding, the difference in point count is small enough to be acceptable. In contrast, if 2♥ is a negative free bid, it should not be allowed as comparable (the point range is very different).

For a substitute call to define a subset of the meanings attributable to the withdrawn call, the meaning(s) attributable to the latter must contain all the hands that the former contains.

**Note:** The interpretation of “subset” is strict (there is no allowance for a “liberal” approach).

**Example 1:** On a competitive auction, North bids 4NT intended as Blackwood. East bids 5♥ and South 5♣ (0-3 keycards without the overcall). Not accepted. South now doubles, showing 0 aces. The meaning of the substitute bid is completely contained in the meanings attributable to the withdrawn bid. Therefore it’s comparable.

**Example 2:** North dealer. South passes. Not accepted. North opens 2NT (20-21 HCP). East passes. Is 3♦ by South comparable to his first pass? It seems making that determination would require mixing the meanings of 23A1 and 23A2 (it is “similar” to a subset), so the answer is no. It is true that over a 2NT opening partner will rarely have a hand that would have opened the bidding, but it is a possibility so 3♦ is not a true subset.

Further, it is hard to say that a call showing five or more hearts is “similar” to a hand that would not open the bidding. The same ruling would apply to a 3♣ Stayman call in the same auction after an out of turn pass by South. It is true that over a 2NT opening there is not much likelihood that ruling these calls comparable will cause a problem later, but they do not fit into any of the separate definitions of comparable found in Law 23. The goal of Law 23 is to increase the frequency of normal bridge results but not at the expense of interpreting the words in a way clearly not intended. Further, the problem with allowing such bids as comparable is drawing the line at a point beyond where it will too often create a problem. The example of 2NT does not seem such a problem, but what if the opening bid was 1NT 15-17? Or 1NT 10-12?

As for the third clause in Law 23, consider this example: An auction starts with 2NT Pass 2♣. Not accepted, replaced with 3♣. One of the meanings attributable to the withdrawn 2♣ is Stayman. 3♣ serves the same purpose (find a major suit fit). Therefore it’s comparable. Even if 2♣ was regular Stayman and 3♣ was Puppet Stayman, the Director should allow the call as comparable because the general purpose is the same (23C might apply if the difference between the two calls helps the partner of the offender to reach a good result on the board).

It should be clear that the basic idea of the “comparable call” concept is that the substitute call is comparable to the withdrawn call if the withdrawn call does not carry significant additional information for the offender’s partner. In borderline cases, the Director can use this approach as a decider.

**23B:** When a substitute call is deemed to be comparable to the one withdrawn, the auction and play continue normally. Law 16 (unauthorized information) and 26 (lead penalties) do not apply (but see 23C below).

**23C:** In some rare occasions the small difference between the original and the substitute calls provides assistance in reaching a better result, damaging the non-offending side. If this happens, the Director should seek to remove that advantage and restore equity (Law 12).

The Director should resist the temptation of liberally deeming calls as comparable, thinking that, “If there is a problem, we can always use 23C to adjust.” 23C is a last resort, not a default procedure.

**Some practical aspects:** This law is not easy to apply. The best way to handle it is to think along these lines: “What does the player want to do, and is it comparable?” Talking with the offender away from the table, explain to them the general mechanics of the law if you think that it will be useful. Ask them what they would like to do in case LHO does not accept their illegal call. Inform them if you will deem the proposed call as comparable or not. If not comparable, tell them about the consequences and be sure that they understand them. Ask if they have an alternative action? Try not to coach the player into a specific option. The Director’s role is not to choose an action on behalf of the player. Returning to the table and give LHO their options, don’t tell them if the offender will have a comparable call or not. Just explain what will happen in either case. In due time give the offender their choice to call and tell the table if the call is comparable or not, and then apply the consequences.

When this law is invoked because of a call out of rotation, a major difficulty is that the Director doesn’t know yet what will be the course of action if the call is not accepted. The best approach is to first explain the law at the table and then give to offender’s LHO their option to accept the call out of rotation or not. The Director needs to talk to the offender away from the table, as discussed above, only in some cases when the illegal call is not accepted.

**Example:** Dealer South. West “opens” with 2♠ showing spades and a minor suit. The Director should say something like: “North can accept, in which case the auction continues. If not, 2♠ is canceled, and South starts the auction. If South passes West must repeat 2♠, and the auction continues. If South bids, then if West chooses a comparable call, the auction continues. If not, East must pass once.” If South passes, there is no need to talk with West away from the table. If South bids something, take West away and check if they understand their options. Answer any

questions, then return to the table, let the player choose their action and apply additional rectifications if needed.

If the players at the table ask for a definition of “comparable call,” explain it in general terms, simplifying as appropriate and if possible. The players will seldom understand a direct quote of the whole law. At the table, saying that it is a call similar enough that the illegal call does not give extra useful information might do the trick.

We will see other complete examples under laws 27 and 29-31.

## **24 - Card Exposed or Led During the Auction**

*[When the Director determines that during the auction, because of a player’s own error, one or more cards of that player’s hand were in position for the face to be seen by his partner, the Director shall require that every such card be placed face up on the table until the auction ends. Information from cards thus exposed is authorized for the non-offending side but unauthorized for the offending side (see Law 16C).]*

**Then:**

***A. Low Card Not Prematurely Led:** If it is a single card below the rank of an honor and not prematurely led, there is no further rectification (but see E following).*

***B. Single Card of Honor Rank or Card Prematurely Led:** If it is a single card of honor rank or is any card prematurely led, offender’s partner must pass when next it is his turn to call (see Law 72C when a pass damages the non-offending side).*

***C. Two or More Cards Are Exposed:** If two or more cards are so exposed offender’s partner must pass when next it is his turn to call (see Law 72C when a pass damages the non-offending side). (...)*

***E. Defenders:** If at the conclusion of the auction the offender is to become a defender, every such card becomes a penalty card (see Laws 50 and 51).]*

There is a significant change in this law, compared to the 2007 version. It now only applies if the card is exposed after the start of the auction (in the 2007 version, it applied if the card was exposed after the start of the auction period). If the card is exposed before anybody calls (for example while the player takes the cards out of the board), it is now just a matter of unauthorized information, and 16D applies. The information about the card is unauthorized for everybody at the table. The same law applies if the card is exposed because of a third-party's actions (like when a player from another table delivers the boards for the next round, and a card drops face up on the table).

## 25 - Legal and Illegal Changes of Call

**Unintended call:** Until their partner makes a subsequent call, the Director should permit a player to change an unintended call without penalty. With bidding boxes, “unintended” means a slip of the fingers (relatively frequent). With spoken bidding, it means a slip of the tongue (much rarer). It does not mean a slip of the mind or a lapse of concentration.

**Example:** Auction starts with 1♠ Pass 3♣ Pass. The dealer explains the meaning of 3♣ (support in spades) and passes. It should be virtually impossible to convince the Director that the moment they passed, they did not intend it. It was a momentary lapse of concentration; the player never meant to play in 3♣, but because they had decided not to bid 4♠ they had a concentration lapse and passed. The pass stands.

To correctly apply this law, it is important to ask the right questions to the player, away from the table. In the example above, do not ask, “Did you mean to pass?” They will answer, “Of course not!” So instead try something like, “Did you somehow get distracted for a moment and forgot that the last bid was 3♣?” Very frequently when the player contends that they never wanted to make that call, what they really mean is that there was a lapse of concentration.

An unwritten guideline is that a “neighbor call” (an adjacent call in the bidding box, like 2NT instead of 2♣ or 1♥ instead of 1♠) can be a slip of the fingers and others much more rarely are, especially when a different pocket is involved, but there are exceptions. For example, a player with a 5=3=3=2 opens 1NT instead of 1♠. Maybe they had a spade in with the clubs (in that case the 1NT call was intended), or they had a change of heart about opening 1NT with a 5-card spade suit (also intended). Maybe it was a genuine slip of the finger (unintended). It’s up to the Director to investigate and to make the best judgment call as possible. The onus is on the player to convince the Director that the call was unintended; when in doubt the Director will rule otherwise.

Note that it does not matter how the player became aware of their mistake.

**Example 1:** A player opens 1NT (15-17 HCP) instead of 1♠. Partner announces 15-17, and now the player realizes the mistake. That’s fine (25A3), and it should be pretty easy to ascertain that it was a mechanical error.

**Example 2:** The dealer opens with 2♦ (weak) and the opponent asks if it promises six. Partner replies “Yes, at least six diamonds.” Now the dealer realizes that the opening bid was not 2♥ as intended.

**Example 3:** A player opens 1NT (instead of 1♠), LHO doubles, RHO alerts and partner asks what the double means. Because of the alert, the player realizes their mistake.

In all these cases, the player can change the bid without penalty.

When the player realizes the mistake after the LHO calls over the unintended call, they can still change their call, but in this case, the LHO can also change their call without rectification. The information arising from LHO’s call is authorized for RHO and unauthorized for the opponents.

What about information arising from the unintended call? By definition, if it is genuinely unintended, it carries no information.

Once their partner takes a call, an unintended call stands without change, and if the player somehow demonstrates that the call was unintended, that information is, of course, unauthorized for their partner. If the auction finishes before partner calls, the player can change their unintended call until an opening lead is faced (25A5 and 17D).

**Intended call:** Regarding the change of an intended call, there are usually two possible scenarios: a) the player wants to change the call, and the Director is called because of that, and b) the player changes the call, and the Director is called after the fact.

- a) When a player wants to change their intended call, the law is simple: The Director will not allow it (25B2). Sometimes the player will argue that they are willing to pay the penalty for the change, but a change of an intended call is simply not allowed!
- b) When there is a purposeful correction by the bidder **before** the Director is called, LHO has the option of accepting it. If they do, the first call is canceled, the second call stands, and the auction continues normally. If they don't, the second call is canceled and the first call stands (25B1).

**Example:** “1♥ - 1♠ sorry, double” LHO can accept the double. If they do, 1♠ is canceled, and the auction continues after 1♥-Dbl. If not, the double is canceled, and 1♠ stands.

In all situations under 25B, there may be lead penalties (Law 26) because of the canceled call whenever the offending player becomes a defender (the director should inform LHO of this before giving them the option to accept the substitute call or not).

Also, 16C (unauthorized information from partner) always applies to the canceled call, and to any remarks made by the offending player (for example, “Oh sorry, I didn't want to bid this.”).

Note that if the original call was insufficient, the Director applies Law 27C (Insufficient Bid, Premature Replacement) instead.



## 26 - Call Withdrawn, Lead Restrictions

Law 26 was greatly simplified in 2017, by comparison to previous editions of the Laws. It is a general law that applies whenever an offending player withdraws a call (even if the specific law does not say explicitly that it applies). The exception is when the specific law explicitly states that 26 does not apply.

Under the current wording of Law 26, it is important to understand the concept of “denomination specified” by a call. According to “Definitions,” the denomination specified by a bid is the suit of the bid itself. However, the wording of law 29C, the plural in “denomination(s) specified by a call” in 27B1a and the fact that the same 27B1a admits that a pass, double or redouble (calls that are not bids) can also show denomination(s) make it clear that “specified” applies to the suit(s) shown by a call rather than the suit named. For example, if 2♥ is a transfer, the denomination specified is spades, not hearts. If a player makes a Michaels cuebid, which specifies spades and hearts, they are specifying both majors within one bid.

*[A. **No Lead Restrictions:** When an offending player’s call is withdrawn and it is replaced by a comparable call (see Law 23A), then if he becomes a defender there are no lead restrictions for his side. Law 16C does not apply, but see Law 23C.]*

*[B. **Lead Restrictions:** When an offending player’s call is withdrawn and it is not replaced by a comparable call, then if he becomes a defender declarer may, at the offender’s partner’s first turn to lead (which may be the opening lead), prohibit offender’s partner from leading any (one) suit which has not been specified in the legal auction by the offender. Such prohibition continues for as long as the offender’s partner retains the lead.]*

**Note:** Declarer can only forbid one suit and cannot demand one.

### Example 1:

| N  | E  | S | W  |
|----|----|---|----|
| 1♥ | 1♠ | P | 2♠ |
| 2♥ |    |   |    |

2♥ is not accepted. North replaces it with a pass, and the auction ends with another two passes. The pass by North is not comparable to 2♥, so there will be a lead penalty. South has the opening lead, and declarer can forbid a lead in one of the suits not specified by North during the legal auction (spades, clubs or diamonds).

**Example 2:** North is dealer, but East opens out of rotation with 2♠, showing spades and a minor suit. Not accepted. North now opens 1NT and East chooses 2♠ again. However, 2♠ now shows only spades. Therefore, it's not comparable. The auction continues:

| N   | E   | S   | W        |
|-----|-----|-----|----------|
| 1NT | 2♠  | 2NT | Pass     |
| 3♣  | Dbl | 3♦  | All Pass |

2NT is Lebensohl, and the double by East shows a club suit. The fact that East showed both suits from the illegal call during the legal auction does not cancel the lead penalty. If the substitute call is not comparable, the lead penalty applies to every suit not shown by the offender during the legal auction. Therefore, the first time that West is on lead, North can forbid a heart or a diamond lead.

**Note:** There are many examples of calls that do not specify any suit: most notrump bids, strong artificial opening bids such as 2♣, all-purpose cuebids, many non-penalty doubles and redoubles, some artificial takeout bids, most passes, etc. In these cases, the lead penalty when the withdrawn call is not substituted with a comparable call will still apply to any suit not shown by the offender during the legal auction.

## 27 - Insufficient Bid

A very important technical point when dealing with insufficient bids (and generically whenever the Director needs to talk with a player to obtain information that they need to apply a law) is that all inquiries should be made away from the table. If the Director inquires at the table, additional information that the players are not supposed to have will be produced, sometimes transforming a small problem into a bigger one.

The first thing that the Director needs to establish (always away from the table) is if the insufficient bid was unintended. If that is the case, Law 25A applies instead of Law 27.

When the Director is satisfied that 25A does not apply, they need to continue talking with the player away from the table to determine what calls might be comparable (see Law 23), and which is the lowest bid that shows the same denomination(s) as the insufficient bid, if there is one (see Law 27B1a). The Director should have all the information that they might need before starting to deal with the mechanics of Law 27 at the table. Otherwise, they could create a bigger problem of their own doing.

**Example:** The auction starts with 2♦ and the next player overcalls with... 2♠! Suppose that the director explains the law and the consequences without first taking the player aside. LHO does not accept. The player now replaces 2♦ with 2♣. Oops...Is it comparable? Now the Director has to stop and find it out. When they determine that it is not, the player says, “But I was entitled to know that before making my choice!” and they are 100% right. Applying the correct technique (see the explanation of Law 23), if the player chooses 2♣, they will already know that it is not comparable, and it won’t be a problem.

If 25A does not apply:

*[27A1. Any insufficient bid may be accepted (treated as legal) at the option of offender’s LHO. It is accepted if that player calls.]*

If the insufficient bid is accepted the auction proceeds normally.

**Example:** 1NT 1♥, accepted. 1♠ is now the cheapest legal bid, superseding 1♥.

**Example:** 1♠ (1♥) 2♠ and the 2♠ bidder says, “I saw it but didn’t realize that it was insufficient. Director!” Accepted. Even if it is clear that LHO “saw” something else, they did call intentionally. Therefore they accepted the insufficient bid.

It is a very bad practice to simply ask if LHO accepts the insufficient bid or not. The director should always explain the consequences of either choice before giving LHO their options.

**Note:** When either non-offender points out that the bid is insufficient, that does not suggest acceptance of the insufficient bid, nor is it an exercise of any options available to the non-offenders.

*[27A2. If a player makes an insufficient bid out of rotation Law 31 applies.]*

Rarely will it happen that a player makes an insufficient bid out of rotation. If it happens, apply the respective “out of rotation” Law instead of 27.

### **When the insufficient bid is not accepted:**

1. If the insufficient bid is corrected by the lowest sufficient bid that specifies the same denomination(s), or by a comparable call (bid, double, redouble or pass), the auction proceeds without further rectification (there are no lead penalties and no unauthorized information issues). If the Director judges at the end of the play that the non-offending side is damaged by assistance given to the offender’s partner by the insufficient bid, they shall award an adjusted score, seeking to recover as nearly as possible the probable outcome of the board had the insufficient bid not occurred (27D, and see 12B1).
2. Except as in #1 above, if the offender corrects the insufficient bid with any other bid or pass (not a double or redouble), their partner must pass throughout the remainder of the auction. Lead penalties apply if the offender becomes a defender (Law 26).

3. The Director should always caution the offender against a double or redouble (except when that call is comparable to the insufficient bid, see #1 above). Therefore, a noncomparable double or redouble should never happen with the Director at the table. If it does happen the offender must replace it with a legal call, partner must pass throughout the remainder of the auction and lead restrictions apply if the offender becomes a defender (Law 26).
4. If the offender replaces the insufficient bid with another insufficient bid after the Director is called (with bidding boxes, it shouldn't happen if the Director is careful), LHO is now given the option to accept the second insufficient bid. If they do not, the offender must substitute it with a legal call and the consequences for partner are the same as in #3 above.

It is not unusual to see a player replace an insufficient bid before the director arrives at the table. The Director should ascertain that this was not induced by an opponent, "You have to make it sufficient." If that happens, Law 11 (action by non-offending side before the Director is summoned) might come into play. If that is not the case, then Law 27C (Premature Replacement) specifies that LHO has the option to accept the first (insufficient) bid. If they do, the second bid is canceled, and the first one stands. If they don't, the first bid is canceled. If the second bid is legal, it stands, and the Director applies #1-#3 above to this bid. If it is insufficient, apply #4 above instead.

**Example 1:** 1NT 2♠ 2♦. The 2♦ call was clearly intended as a transfer bid. If not accepted, it may be corrected to 3♦ if this is also a transfer (lowest bid that shows the same denomination as the insufficient bid) and the auction continues without further rectification.

**Example 2:** NS are playing a strong club system. West is the dealer and opens 1NT (15-17), North bids 1♣ (not noticing West's bid, 15+ as an opening bid). Not accepted. A penalty double, showing 15-17, would be allowed as comparable because it defines a subset of all the hands that would open 1♣.

**Example 3:** 1NT 2♦ 2♣. Here one of the attributable meanings of the 2♣ call is a Stayman. If this pair plays a cue bid of 3♦ as asking for a four-card major, such a correction should be allowed (same purpose as 2♣) without barring partner from the auction. Similarly, if this pair played no conventions over their 1NT opening (unlikely as that may be), 2♣ showing clubs, a correction to 3♣ should also be made without penalty (3♣ would be the lowest bid showing the same denomination as the insufficient bid).

**Example 4:**

1NT Pass 2♦ 2♠  
2♥

2♥ is not accepted. If the offenders do not play “super accepts,” and always accept the transfer, then 2♥ does not carry any information (any hand that opens 1NT replies 2♥ to the 2♦ bid). Therefore, any legal call from the 1NT opener would be comparable, because the attributable meanings of such a call (including pass, or double) would all be contained in the hands shown by 2♥, which are all the hands that originally opened 1NT.

## **28 to 32 - Call out of Rotation**

### **General approach**

These Laws had a profound makeover in the 2017 edition. The intention behind the changes was to reach normal bridge results as much as possible, using the concept of “comparable call” to allow the auction and play to proceed without further rectification in many instances where, under the 2007 Laws, there would be at least one enforced pass for offender’s partner.

When a call out of rotation is not accepted, there is at least one other player that will have their turn before the offender. One of the consequences for the Director is that it may not be practical to discuss with the offender what calls might be comparable, because of the simple fact that the available calls (and their meanings) will depend on the

choices made by the player(s) in rotation before the offender gets their turn.

For this reason, and to avoid having to talk with the offender more than once away from the table, the best approach is to deal with the mechanical part of Laws 28-32 first and talk with the offender about their options if the illegal call is not accepted. The general principle being that if the offender makes a comparable call, the auction and play continues without further rectification. It is a good approach to simplify the problem by asking the player what they would like to do, and check if that is comparable, or if any alternatives sought by the player would be comparable. Never coach the player into a specific call, but explain to them clearly the consequences of the different alternatives.

Laws 30, 31 and 32 deal respectively with a pass, a bid and a double or redouble out of rotation. We will discuss them separately, but generically speaking, an out of rotation call can be accepted by LHO of the offender (this should always be the first option offered by the Director) unless it's an inadmissible double or redouble, in which case it cannot be accepted. The rest of this section assumes that the call was not accepted, and it's a brief and simplified summary of how these three laws operate.

1. For a pass made at RHO's turn, the offender must repeat the pass, and the auction continues normally. For a bid, double or redouble made at RHO's turn, if RHO passes the offender must repeat the call, and the auction and play continue normally (except if it was an inadmissible double or redouble).
2. If the call was made at partner's turn, or at LHO's turn when they are the opener, the auction reverts to the player in turn, and the call out of rotation is UI for offender's partner.
3. If the bid, double or redouble was made at RHO's turn and RHO does not pass, and also for all cases under #2 above, when the offender's turn comes, if they make a comparable call (see Law 23) the auction and play continue normally. If they don't, their partner will have to pass when next is their turn to call (only one time).

**Example:** East is the dealer. South opens out of rotation with 1NT. Director: “West can accept the call, and the auction and play continue normally. If not, and East passes, South must repeat 1NT. Auction and play continue normally. If East does not pass, if South makes a comparable call (the Director might want to replace the term “comparable” with some short description to help the players’ understanding) the auction and play continue normally. If not, North will have to pass once”. West does not accept. East bids 2S. Now the Director takes South away from the table to establish if South’s choice will be comparable. Returning to the table, the Director gives South their choice. South bids 2NT. Director: “I’m deeming this call comparable. Therefore, the auction and play continue normally”.

## 28 - Calls Considered to be in Rotation

*[A. RHO Required to Pass: A call is considered to be in rotation when it is made by a player at his RHO’s turn to call if that opponent is required by law to pass.]*

*B. Call by Correct Player Canceling Call Out of Rotation: A call is considered to be in rotation when made by a player whose turn it was to call before rectification has been assessed for a call out of rotation by an opponent. Making such a call forfeits the right to rectification for the call out of rotation. The auction proceeds as though the opponent had not called at that turn. Law 26 (lead penalties) does not apply, but see Law 16C2.]*

**Example 1:** South is the dealer. East opens out of rotation with 3♣. South bids 1♠. The Director will not have much trouble establishing that South intended to open the auction, probably not having noticed East’s “opening bid.”

**Example 2:** South is dealer. East opens out of rotation with 1♣. South bids 1♠ and West calls the director after noticing the opening bid out of turn. The Director must ascertain (away from the table) if South thought that they were calling over 1♣, in which case they just accepted the bid



out of rotation as per Law 29A (the auction continues normally), or if they wanted to open 1♠ (maybe they didn't notice the 1♣ bid). If this is the case, #2 above applies (1♣ is canceled, the auction starts with 1♠, no lead penalties, but 1♣ is UI for West).

**Example 3:** South is dealer. East opens out of rotation with 1♠. South bids 4♣ and West calls the director after noticing the opening bid out of turn. Talking with South away from the table, it becomes clear that South intended 4♣ as an opening preempt in hearts (also, an overcall of 4♣ over 1♠ would be natural). 4♣ by South is the opening bid. 1♠ is canceled. The auction proceeds as if East had not bid.

This example stresses that the Director should be careful, when giving the ruling, in order to avoid any confusion in the player's minds. The director might say, for example: "As South intended 4♣ as an opening bid, 1♠ is canceled and the auction continues as if it never happened. For all purposes, the auction started normally with South's opening bid."

The same principle applies whenever there might be a question of whether 28B or 29A applies. In a sequence like Example 3, but where South intended 4♣ as a normal overcall, the director might say: "As South intended to bid over 1♠, the bid out of turn is accepted and the auction proceeds, for all purposes, as it is."

## 29 - Procedure after a Call out of Rotation

*[A. Forfeiture of Right to Rectification: Following a call out of rotation offender's LHO may elect to call thereby forfeiting the right to any rectification.]*

*B. Out-of-Rotation Call Canceled: Unless A applies, a call out of rotation is canceled and the auction reverts to the player whose turn it was to call. The offending side is subject to the provisions of Law 30, 31 or 32.*

*C. Call Out of Rotation Is Artificial: If a call out of rotation is artificial, the provisions of Laws 30, 31 and 32 apply to the denomination(s) specified, rather than the denomination named.]*

**Note:** If the offender has previously called, a call out of rotation at offender's LHO's turn to call is treated as a change of call, and Law 25 applies instead. Therefore, the laws for out-of-rotation calls at LHO's turn only apply when LHO is the dealer.

### **30 - Pass out of Rotation**

When a pass out of rotation is not accepted, if it is neither artificial nor a pass of an artificial call by partner, the following provisions apply:

*[A. RHO's Turn to Call: When a pass out of rotation is made at offender's RHO's turn to call, the offender must pass when next it is his turn to call and Law 72C may apply.]*

**At partner's or LHO's turn to call** - Offender's partner may make any legal call at their proper turn, but the pass out of rotation is unauthorized information, and therefore Law 16C2 applies. *[The offender may make any legal call at his correct turn.]*

- a) When the call is a comparable call (see Law 23A), there is no further rectification, and law 26B (lead penalties) does not apply (but see Law 23C).*
- b) When the call is not a comparable call, offender's partner must pass when next it is his turn to call. Laws 16C (unauthorized information), 26B (lead penalties) and 72C (effects of enforced pass) may apply.]*

When a pass out of rotation is artificial or is a pass of an artificial call, Law 31, not Law 30, applies.

**Note:** A pass is artificial when, by special agreement, it promises more than a specified amount of strength, or when it artificially promises or denies values other than in the last suit named.

## 31 - Bid out of Rotation

Law 31 applies for: a) an out-of-rotation bid, b) an out-of-rotation artificial pass, and c) an out-of-rotation pass of partner's artificial call (see Law 30C). If such a call is not accepted:

*[A. At RHO's Turn to Call: If RHO passes, offender must repeat the call out of rotation. When that call is legal, there is no rectification.]*

Otherwise, apply the corresponding law.

*[If RHO makes a legal bid, double or redouble, offender may make any legal call:*

- 1. If the call is a comparable call (see Law 23A), there is no further rectification. Law 26B does not apply but see Law 23C.*
- 2. When the call is not a comparable call (see Law 23A), offender's partner must pass when next it is his turn to call. Laws 16C, 26B, and 72C may apply.]*

*[B. At Partner's or LHO's Turn to Call: When the offender has bid at his partner's turn to call, or at his LHO's turn to call if the offender has not previously called, then:*

- 1. Offender's partner may make any legal call at his proper turn, but Law 16C2 applies (the call out of rotation is UI for the offender's partner).*
- 2. Offender may make any legal call at his correct turn, and director rules as in #1 or #2 above.]*

**Example** (application of Law 16C2): South is the dealer. North "opens" with 1♠. Not accepted. South holds ♠Kxx ♥xxx ♦– ♣KJT9743 (a normal 3♣ opening pre-empt). North's bid out of rotation is UI for South (the Director must make sure that South understands this). With South's hand, the UI implication of the 1♠ opening is a demonstrable suggestion for South not to preempt. The Director should not "prohibit" South from taking any action, just explain the constraints and potential consequences, including the possibility of an adjusted score.

Case a) South decides to pass. South's choice seems to be suggested by North's initial bid out of turn. Irrespective of how the auction continues, the Director should be ready to adjust the final result if EW feel that they were damaged by South's action and subsequent developments. The Director will analyse what would happen if South opens 3♣ and eventually adjust the score against North-South if opening 3♣ would have led to a worse score.

Case b) South decides to open with 3♣. There are no UI implications (South didn't take the action suggested by the illegal call). West passes, and North now bids 3♠ (natural and forcing). If the director deems this comparable to a 1♠ opening, the auction continues normally. If the small difference of information between 1♠ and 3♠ helps South in reaching a good result, the director can apply 23C and remove the advantage gained.

## **32 - Double or Redouble out of Rotation**

Except for the obvious exception of when it is inadmissible, a double or redouble out of rotation may be accepted by the opponent next in rotation, as per Law 29A. When it is not accepted, it is canceled.

### **At RHO's Turn to Call:**

If offender's RHO passes, offender must repeat their out-of-rotation double or redouble. If it is inadmissible, Law 36 applies. If not, there is no further rectification, and the auction proceeds normally.

*[If offender's RHO bids, doubles or redoubles, the offender may, in turn, make any legal call:*

- 1. When the call is comparable (see Law 23A), there is no further rectification. Law 26B does not apply but see Law 23C.*
- 2. When the call is not comparable (see Law 23A), offender's partner must pass when next it is his turn to call. Laws 16C, 26B, and 72C may apply.]*

### **At Offender's Partner's Turn to Call:**

*[Offender's partner may make any legal call, but Law 16C2 applies (the call out of rotation is UI for offender's partner).*

*Offender may make any legal call at his proper turn and the Director rules as in #1 or #2 above.]*

**Example:** West dealer. Auction starts with 2♥ Dbl. Now South also doubles (out of rotation). The inadmissible double may not be accepted. It's East's turn. East passes. South must repeat the double. Now Law 36 applies (offender must substitute the double with a legal call, partner must pass until the end of the auction). South passes, and the auction finishes with another pass. As South became a defender, lead penalties (Law 26) apply (West can forbid North from leading any one suit). Law 72C may also apply if the enforced pass by North result in damage to EW.

### ***[C. Later Calls at LHO's Turn to Call:***

*Later calls at LHO's turn to call are treated as changes of call and Law 25 applies.]*

## **33 - Simultaneous Calls**

When two calls are made at the same time, and one of the calls was made by the player whose turn it was to call, the other call shall be treated as a subsequent call.

**Example:** Dealer South. North doesn't notice and opens out of rotation with 1♦. At the same time, South opens 1♠. South's call was in turn, so North's call is deemed to be subsequent. Therefore the auction is:

|    |     |    |   |
|----|-----|----|---|
| S  | W   | N  | E |
| 1♠ | ... | 1♦ |   |

Law 31 applies to the 1♦ call.

**Note:** This law extends into a general principle that when two actions are simultaneous they are usually treated as consecutive according to the rotation.

### 34 - Retention of Right to Call

Law 34 is fundamentally a repeat of Law 17D3. It kicks in when a pass out of rotation has been accepted by a pass. The Director allows the auction to continue. If a player is skipped and does not get a chance to call, the Director cancels all passes (starting with the first pass out of rotation) and reverts the bidding to the player who missed their turn. 16C (unauthorized information) applies to all the canceled passes (for this purpose, the player who passed out of rotation is the offender).

**Example:**

|      |      |     |     |
|------|------|-----|-----|
| N    | E    | S   | W   |
| 1♠   | Pass | ... | ... |
| Pass | Pass |     |     |

The last two passes are canceled, and the auction reverts to South.

### 35 to 39 - (Inadmissible Calls)

**These calls are inadmissible:**

- a) A double or redouble not permitted by Law 19 (see Law 36).
- b) Any call by a player required to pass (see Law 37).
- c) A bid of more than seven (see Law 38).
- d) A call made after the final pass of the auction (Law 39).

**An inadmissible double or redouble:** If LHO calls before the Director explains the Law, the inadmissible call, and all subsequent calls are canceled. The auction reverts to the player whose turn it was to call. Proceed as if no irregularity occurred, no lead penalties apply. Otherwise, the double or redouble is canceled; offender must substitute

a legal call; offender's partner is barred from the auction; lead penalties apply if the offender becomes a defender (26B); Law 72C may apply.

**Example:**

|     |      |      |    |
|-----|------|------|----|
| 1♠  | Pass | Pass | 2♥ |
| Dbl | Pass | Dbl  |    |

Check if the second Dbl was unintentional (asking the right questions and inspecting the hand away from the table). If so, 25A applies instead.

Assuming that it was intentional, it is inadmissible, cannot be accepted, and must be substituted with a legal call. Inform the players that offender's partner is barred until the end of the auction, that the lead penalties of Law 26 apply if the offender becomes a defender, and that the opponents might be entitled to redress if the enforced pass(es) damage the non-offending side.

**A violation of the obligation to pass:** When a player that is barred from the auction nevertheless calls before the Director manages to stop them, two cases can happen: a) LHO of the offender also calls. That and all subsequent calls stand; the offender must pass for the remainder of the auction; lead restrictions do not apply. b) LHO doesn't call. The offender's call is canceled; the offender must pass, and their partner is barred for the remainder of the auction; lead penalties apply if the offender becomes a defender (26B); Law 72C may apply.

**A bid of more than seven:** Such a call is not permissible and it is canceled, together with any subsequent calls; the offending side must now pass at each turn; lead penalties apply if the offender becomes a defender (26B); Law 72C may apply. With bidding boxes this law is basically irrelevant, due to the absence of bidding cards higher than 7NT.

**A call after the final pass:** All such calls are canceled, and if LHO calls before rectification is applied there is no further rectification. If LHO has not called and the infraction is any call other than pass, the lead restrictions of Law 26B apply if the offender becomes a defender.

### Example:

|      |      |     |           |
|------|------|-----|-----------|
| N    | E    | S   | W         |
| 1♠   | 2♦   | Dbl | Pass      |
| Pass | Pass | 2♠  | Director! |

2♠ is canceled, contract is 2♦X. If the Dbl shows ♥ and ♣ the lead penalties of Law 26 imply that the first time North is on lead East can forbid a lead in spades or diamonds. Also, the information coming from the 2♠ bid is unauthorized for North and authorized for the declarer (East).

## 40 - Partnership Understandings

*[40A1a Partnership understandings as to the methods adopted by a partnership may be reached explicitly in discussion or implicitly through mutual experience or awareness of the players.]*

“No agreement” means that the partnership is relying on knowledge and experience of matters generally known to bridge players (see Law 40B5a). “Not discussed” does not necessarily mean “no agreement.” A certain sequence may never have been explicitly discussed, but if the partnership is “on the same wavelength” because of similar situations that occurred in the past, there is an implicit agreement and, therefore, a partnership understanding that must be disclosed when required.

*[40.2 Information conveyed to partner through such understandings must arise from the calls, plays, and conditions of the current deal. Each player is entitled to take into account the legal auction and, subject to any exclusions in the laws, the cards he has seen. He is also entitled to use information specified elsewhere in the laws to be authorized (see Law 73C).]*

**Example:** The auction starts with 1NT - 1♠ (not accepted) which is then replaced with a Pass. The next player now bids 2♣ Stayman. The partnership understanding is that 2♣ asks for a four-card major, but in this situation, common knowledge and logic indicates that it is only asking about hearts.



**General Guidelines:** Players' agreements, whether implicit or explicit, must be available to the opponents. However, this includes intentionally misleading calls or plays that depart from commonly accepted or previously announced conventional practice. *[40.3 a player may make any call or play without prior announcement, provided that such call or play is not based on an undisclosed partnership understanding.]* In other words, a player may make any bid that will fool partner and opponents equally. ACBL or other sponsoring organizations, however, control the use of psychic bids by controlling the conventional usages which may impact them (for example, within the ACBL “psyching” a strong, artificial bid like 2♣ is disallowed).

Both members of a partnership must use the same system. They must have two identical convention cards made out for the use of the opponents. Players must not refer to their own convention cards or use any other aids to their memory, calculations, or technique.

**Not allowed:** During a session of play, a system may not be varied, except with the Director’s permission (a Director might allow a pair to change a convention but would not allow a pair to change its basic system). However, it is ALLOWED, at the outset of a round or session, for a pair to review its opponents’ convention card and alter its defenses against the opponents’ special understandings and preemptive bids. This must be announced to the opponents. The opponents, in turn, may NOT vary their system after being informed of these defensive alterations.

**Example:** Before the round starts a pair notices that the opponents are playing very aggressive preempts and decide to change their doubles over a preemptive bid from take-out to penalty. The opponents cannot modify their preempting range.

*[40.4 The agreed meaning of a call or play shall not alter by reference to the member of the partnership by whom it is made (this requirement does not restrict style and judgment, only method).]*

**Example:** A partnership cannot play transfers by one player only, but a player can use their judgement to decide not to transfer.

A partnership may not vary its understanding during the auction or play because of:

- A question asked (or not asked) by it or the opposing partnership, or
- A response by its side to an opposing player's question, or
- An irregularity committed by the opponents.

**Special Partnership Understandings:** This expression is used in the Laws to refer to what are commonly known as “artificial calls” (but not exclusively).

*[40B1b A special partnership understanding is one whose meaning, in the opinion of the Regulating Authority, may not be readily understood and anticipated by a significant number of players in the tournament. The Regulating Authority may designate certain partnership understandings as ‘special partnership understandings.’]*

**Example:** 2♣ natural in response to a 1NT opening would be considered a special partnership understanding. 2♣ Stayman is not.

*[40B1c Any call that has an artificial meaning constitutes a special partnership understanding (unless the Regulating Authority designates otherwise).]*

*[40B2ai The Regulating Authority is empowered without restriction to allow, disallow, or allow conditionally, any special partnership understanding.]*

**Example:** An opening bid of 1NT or an opening bid of one in a suit which, by partnership agreement, could show fewer than 8 high-card points is designated by the ACBL as a “special partnership understanding” and are disallowed in all ACBL sanctioned events.

**Forbidden systems or conventions:** *[40B4 When a side is damaged by an opponent’s use of a special partnership understanding that does not comply with the regulations governing the tournament, the score shall be adjusted. A side in breach of those regulations may be subject to a*

*procedural penalty.*] The recommended approach when the Director is called because of an illegal convention is the following:

1. Verify that the convention is, in fact, illegal.
2. If the hand is not over, let the auction and play continue (even if the Director is called immediately after an illegal bid, the bid cannot be withdrawn because it was not an inadvertent call and therefore 25A cannot apply) and advise the players of the possibility of an impending adjustment and/or procedural penalty.
3. If there was damage arising from the use of the illegal convention, after the hand is over, check the final result. If it is worth less than Ave+ for the non-offending pair (60% or 3 IMPs), the score will be adjusted to Ave+ (unless it is clear that without the illegal method the score would have been better than that for the non-offenders).
4. If there was no damage, apply a procedural penalty to the offending side.

**Full disclosure:** *[40B5a Players are expected to explain their methods fully and accurately. Bridge is not a game of secrets. When explaining the significance of partner's call or play (...) a player shall disclose all special information conveyed to him through partnership agreement or partnership experience, but he need not disclose inferences drawn from his knowledge and experience of matters generally known to bridge players].* When a side is damaged because of failure by the opponents to adequately disclose the meaning of a call or play, Law 21 (Misinformation) applies.

**Psychic Calls:** While psychic bids are an integral part of bridge, a player does not have the right to psych as frequently as they wish simply because they enjoy doing so. A series of tops and bottoms so earned by one pair can unfairly affect the final results of a tournament.

**ACBL's Policy on Psychs:** Psychs are regulated by taking disciplinary action against a player who disrupts a game with frequent, random

psychs. The ACBL Board of Directors has defined types of disruptive bidding that make the offenders subject to penalty.

The following definitions and explanations should prove helpful to all Directors trying to enforce this regulation.

**Excessive Psychic Bidding:** When three or more psychic initial actions by members of a partnership have been reported in any one session and are called to the attention of the Director, the Director should investigate the possibility that excessive psyching is taking place. A presumption of inappropriate behavior exists, and it is up to the players to demonstrate that they were not just horsing around. It is up to them to show that they happened, this once, to pick up a string of hands unusually appropriate for psychs.

If there is an increased awareness in the partnership that a call in a given situation is likely to be a psych, this creates an implicit understanding. The frequent use of undisciplined psychic bids, for example, tends to create an implied partnership understanding from experience. Note that the Director can judge the existence of this “increased awareness” from accumulated knowledge, or other sources of information. Note also that implicit agreements regarding psychic calls are very easy to form.

**Example 1:** If a player psychs an opening of 1♠ in third position with favorable vulnerability two times with the same partner during one weekend, the next time they play together that pair is going to have a hard time convincing the Director that there was no implicit agreement about that situation.

**Example 2:** If a player opens 1♦ three times in one session with two or fewer diamonds, partner finds it hard to take any 1♦ opening bid seriously. The implicit understanding is established.

Whenever the psychic bidder’s partner, because of prior usages, has a better chance of catching on to a psych than either opponent, there is presumptive evidence that an undisclosed partnership understanding exists, and the result of the board might be adjusted.

**Frivolous Psychic Bidding:** Players are expected to play for the best score possible at all times. Any psychic action inspired by a spirit of malicious mischief or lack of will to win may be interpreted as frivolous and should be firmly dealt with.

**Unsportsmanlike Psychic Bidding:** Action apparently designed to give the opponents an abnormal opportunity to get a good score, psychs against pairs or teams in contention, psychs against inexperienced players, and psychs used merely to create action at the table are examples of unsportsmanlike psychic bidding.

**Note to Club Managers:** Clubs can regulate the use of psychs by saying, for example, that the burden of proof will be on the player, if they make more than two psychic calls per session, to prove that they are not using excessive, frivolous or unsportsmanlike psychic bidding. Disciplinary action should be taken against a player whose bidding does not conform to these regulations. Score adjustments should be made when the result was affected because the partner, due to previous experience, may have allowed for the psychic call.

**Psychs which require no regulation or director attention:** Any call that deliberately and grossly misstates either honor strength or suit length is by definition a psych. However, some psychs are disruptive to the game, while others involve bridge tactics.

These definitions should help to distinguish a psych that warrants disciplinary action or, at the least, attention by the Director, from those that are an integral part of the game.

A tactical bid is a psych that is made to paint a picture in an opponent's mind and partner's mind that will cause them to play you for a holding that you do not have, enabling you to succeed at the contract to which you were inevitably headed.

**Note:** Frequent use of a certain tactic will develop an implicit partnership agreement which requires an Alert, possibly delayed.

**Example:** After partner opens with 1♠, responder bids 2♦ (ostensibly natural) to try to ward off a diamond lead on the way to 4♠ holding:

♠ QJxxx ♥ Ax ♦ xxx ♣ KQx.

Or, responder might cuebid an ace they don't have on the way to six of a suit.

A waiting bid is generally a forcing bid made by responder to allow them time to learn more about partner's opening hand. This type of call is only rarely a psych since, in most cases, the suit length is not grossly misstated.

**Example:** Over a 1♠ opening, responder bids 2♣ on ♠ Axxxx ♥ xxxx ♦ xx ♣ AQ. The hand is too good for 2♠ and not good enough to force to game. The 2♣ bid is a waiting bid. If opener rebids 2♠, responder can now bid 3♠ invitational.

**Deviations:** A deviation was defined by Don Oakie (Feb. 1978, ACBL Bridge Bulletin) as a bid in which the strength of the hand is within a queen of the agreed or announced strength, and the bid is of a suit of ample length or of notrump. He also defined a deviation as a bid of a suit in which the length of the suit varies by no more than one card from the agreed or announced length, and the hand contains ample high-card values for the bid in the system being played. If either of these situations occurs, it is easy to see by repeating the definition of a psych (a deliberate and gross misstatement of honor strength or suit length) that a deviation is NOT a PSYCH.

However, frequent undisclosed deviations may indicate that the pair has an undisclosed agreement acquired through experience. This situation should be dealt with firmly.

## Convention Card Regulations

The Laws allow any player to refer to an opponent's convention card: prior to play; during the clarification period; and at their own turn to call or play. In addition, any player may consult the opponent's convention card at RHOs turn to call; and, except for dummy, may refer to an opponent's convention card at their own turn to play. No player, however, may refer to their own convention card at any time during the auction or play.

ACBL has established the following for all sanctioned events:

- Convention Charts, where it is specified what agreements are allowed or not, for all game levels. The last edition of the Convention Charts was published in Nov 2018 and establishes four types of Chart: Basic, Basic+, Open, and Open+.
- A convention card on which players list their conventions and agreements. All conventions marked in blue on the convention card require an Announcement. All conventions marked in red and all unusual treatments require an Alert.
- The ACBL Alert Procedures, with detailed regulations regarding Pre-Alerts, Immediate Alerts, Announcements and Delayed Alerts

**Note:** The Open Chart is recommended for Open club games. More advanced clubs might want to use the Open+ Chart, while clubs that cater for newer players may prefer the Basic+ Chart. The ACBL recommends that masterpoint restricted games use the Basic and Basic+ Charts. A 0-750 game, for example, should probably use the Basic Chart, but it's up to the club to regulate this.

**Note:** Whenever written defenses are required or permitted, they may be referred to by any player whenever it would be appropriate to refer to an opponent's convention card. This is the case for some events played under the Open+ Chart.

**Pre-Alerts** are designed to act as an early warning system of any unusual methods for which the opponents may need to prepare. Pre-Alerts must be given before the auction period begins on the first board of a round or match. Types of agreements, treatments, etc., that must be pre-Alerted include, among others, systems based on highly aggressive methods, systems that are fundamentally unfamiliar to the opponents, and leading low from a doubleton.

**Immediate Alerts** are given at the time partner makes a call which requires an Alert. Using spoken bidding, the partner of the player making an Alertable call says "Alert." Using bidding boxes, an Alert is made by tapping an Alert card on the table or by tapping the Alert strip on the side of the bid box. In addition, the Alerter must say "Alert."

An **Announcement** is one word or a short phrase which tells the opponents directly the meaning of partner's call. When bidding boxes are used, the "Alert" strip is tapped also. Announcements are required in the following instances:

- After a natural 1NT opening bid. The partner of the bidder will say aloud the range (for example, "fifteen to seventeen")
- After a ♦ or ♥ transfer response at any level to any natural notrump opening, overcall or rebid. The notrump opener will say aloud, "transfer". This also applies for those methods that initially treat the bid as a transfer even though rarely the bidder will have a strong hand without the next higher suit. When the message is sent that the transfer was not a transfer, just the first step in showing another type of game-going hand, the call that sends that message must be Alerted.
- After a 1NT forcing or semi-forcing response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid with no interference. The opening bidder will say aloud, "Forcing" or "Semi-forcing," if there was no other meaning attached to the agreement.
- After a non-forcing opening 1♣ or 1♦ for which the opener could have fewer than three cards in the suit opened. After the opening bid, the opening bidder's partner says, "May be short."



**Delayed Alert:** Once the auction has progressed to the point that the opening bidder has had the opportunity to make a second call, conventional bids at the four level or higher are not Alerted until the auction is over. Other conventional calls (pass, double, redouble) when the auction is at the four level or higher require immediate alerts, according to the current Alert Procedures.

The declaring side must make their delayed Alerts before the opening lead. Defenders wait until they have made the opening lead and before Declarer has called for a card from the dummy before they explain calls requiring a Delayed Alert (alerting before the lead is turned face-up and the dummy is spread is best). As with normal Alerts, the partner of the person making the Alertable call is the person who makes the delayed Alert and explains the agreement.

## CHAPTER VI - THE PLAY

### 41 - Commencement of Play

The facing of the opening lead concludes the auction period. Opening leads must be made face down per ACBL regulations.

**Note:** The period between the end of the auction (face down lead) and the end of the auction period (opening lead faced) is referred to as the clarification period.

*[41A (...) The face-down lead may be withdrawn only upon instruction of the Director after an irregularity (see Laws 47E and 54); the withdrawn card must be returned to the defender's hand.]* The opening leader cannot change their face down lead unless there is an irregularity (misinformation, for example), and then only if the lead would be different without the irregularity (with the correct information).

The opening leader may ask for a review or an explanation of an opponent's call prior to their opening lead. Declarer has the same rights until their first play to trick one. The Laws specify that *[41B declarer's first turn to play is from dummy unless accepting a lead out of turn]*. Leader's partner has the same rights until they play to trick one. They may ask after the opening lead has been made face down and again before they play to trick one. Note that dummy cannot ask for a review.

*[41B The defenders (subject to Law 16) and the declarer retain the right to request explanations throughout the play period, each at his own turn to play.]*

*[41C Following this Clarification Period, the opening lead is faced, the play period begins irrevocably, and dummy's hand is spread (...)]*

**Note:** The fact that the play period starts irrevocably after the opening lead is faced means that irregularities during the auction can no longer be corrected.

**Example:** Auction starts as 1♦ Pass 1NT All Pass. The opening lead is faced up, and the last player to pass calls the Director because they meant to double and pulled the wrong card (their hand is ♠ AK ♥ KJ98 ♦ AKQJ87 ♣ 5). Before the opening lead was faced, Law 25A1 would apply, and the last call could be substituted. If there were a face down opening lead it would be picked up, and the auction would continue. Because the auction period has ended and the play period started irrevocably, now 25A5 applies, and no change can be made. Of course, if the reason for the change was made publicly by the player, Law 16 also applies.

*[41C After it is too late to have previous calls restated, declarer or either defender, at his own turn to play, is entitled to be informed as to what the contract is and whether, but not by whom, it was doubled or redoubled.]* This right does not expire (if declarer or a defender forgets the contract at trick 12, they can still ask what the contract is, as long as it is done at their turn to play; for declarer this can be done when they are going to play from their hand or from dummy).

*[41D After the opening lead is faced, dummy spreads his hand in front of him on the table, face up, sorted into suits, the cards in order of rank with lowest ranking cards towards declarer, and in separate columns pointing lengthwise towards declarer. Trumps are placed to dummy's right. Declarer plays both his hand and that of dummy.]*

**Note:** When the dummy is not properly arranged, a violation of Law 41D has occurred. It is illegal to spread the cards with the highest cards closest to the declarer, or in such a way that the columns are not separated, or out of order, or widthwise towards declarer, or any other “creative” variations.

*[WBF Laws Commentary: Only the declaring side is responsible for the correctness of the dummy's hand. For instance, the defenders have no obligation to observe that dummy has too few or too many cards, or that the dummy has played a card not designated by declarer.]*

**Example 1:** West leads the ♥K from AK876 against a spade contract, and dummy spreads ♠ Q876 ♥ 3 ♦ KJ87 ♣ A98. All follow, and now

West changes suit because dummy is ruffing hearts. Eventually, it is found out that Dummy had displayed 12 cards (a heart card was hiding under the spades). NS are responsible for the irregularity. If there is damage because of West not playing the second heart, the score can be adjusted.

**Example 2:** Same setup as in #1 up to the first trick, but now West continued with a small heart at the second trick and declarer ruffed, later on in the play the extra heart is discovered. Dummy revoked (see Law 14B4). However, because it was a revoke with a card belonging to dummy, Law 64B3 tells us that there is no automatic trick adjustment (no transfer of tricks). Law 64C1 instructs the Director to adjust the score if the non-offending side (EW) was damaged.

## 42 – Dummy’s Rights

**Absolute rights:** These are rights that dummy has and cannot be taken away.

### *[42A Absolute Rights*

- 1. Dummy is entitled to give information, in the Director’s presence, as to fact or law.*
- 2. He may keep count of tricks won and lost.*
- 3. He plays the cards of the dummy as declarer’s agent as directed and ensures that dummy follows suit (see Law 45F if dummy suggests a play).]*

In order to exercise the right to count tricks won and lost, dummy needs to follow the play as it occurs. If a player turns their cards in such a fashion that dummy cannot see them, the Director should require the player to fully face the cards as they play them.

**Note:** If declarer designates a card from dummy that would be a revoke, as per 42A3 dummy should ensure that they instead follow suit.

Dummy may not point out to declarer that they have a trick incorrectly turned unless they do so before their side leads or plays to the next trick

(Law 65B). If dummy happens to point out a trick incorrectly turned, and the Director considers that dummy's action might have aided declarer's play, the Director can consider a score adjustment. If there are repeated violations by dummy, a procedural penalty might be in order.

**Example:** At Swiss Teams, dummy has ♠AQ and declarer ♠32, two cards from the end, with three cards in spades still missing. Declarer is on lead and has made eight tricks, but has only seven pointed in the right direction, having turned the first one the wrong way. When declarer plays from their hand, LHO plays small, and declarer starts thinking. Dummy points out declarer's mistake, and declarer now plays the Ace. The Director should consider the possibility of a score adjustment (RHO had ♠K ♦J).

**Qualified rights:** These are rights that dummy can lose when they violate specific conditions listed in Law 43.

### *[42B Qualified Rights*

*Dummy may exercise other rights subject to the limitations stated in Law 43.*

- 1. 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.*
- 2. He may try to prevent any irregularity.*
- 3. He may draw attention to any irregularity, but only after play of the hand is concluded.]*

What to do if, for example, during play, dummy asks a defender whether they revoked? The Laws do not prescribe any specific rectification. If the Director judges that dummy might be trying to call declarer's attention to a revoke that they did not notice, the director might consider a score adjustment. However, note that after the play is concluded dummy can draw attention to any irregularity that happened during play. Therefore, in the majority of the situations dummy will not benefit from calling attention too early. A stern warning and eventually a procedural penalty are probably enough.

If declarer tries to play from the wrong hand, dummy may try to prevent it, calling partner's attention to which hand won the previous trick. However, once declarer actually plays from the wrong hand, the irregularity is already committed, and dummy cannot prevent it anymore.

### **43 - Dummy's Limitations**

Except as allowed in Law 42, dummy has the following limitations:

#### ***[43A Limitations on Dummy***

1. (a) *Dummy may not initiate a call for the Director during play unless another player has drawn attention to an irregularity.*  
(b) *Dummy may not call attention to an irregularity during play.*  
(c) *Dummy must not participate in the play, nor may he communicate anything about the play to declarer.*
2. (a) *Dummy may not exchange hands with declarer.*  
(b) *Dummy may not leave his seat to watch declarer's play of the hand.*  
(c) *Dummy may not look at the face of a card in either defender's hand.*
3. *A defender may not show dummy his hand.]*

**Note:** The dummy may not look at a defender's hand, nor can the defender show their hand to dummy. For this reason, dummy can ask a defender to conceal their hand better. Also, if a defender gives dummy the opportunity to look, dummy should decline, look the other way and if necessary call the Director.

**If Violation Occurs:** Violations of 43A1 and 43A2 above can be subject to a procedural penalty (Law 90) and might result in an adjusted score if the defenders are damaged by dummy's actions. Furthermore, breaching 43A2 jeopardizes their qualified rights:

***[43B2 If dummy, after his violation of the limitations listed in 43A2:***

- a) *warns declarer not to lead from the wrong hand, either defender may choose the hand from which declarer shall lead.*
- b) *is the first to ask declarer if a play from declarer's hand constitutes a revoke, declarer must substitute a correct card if his play was illegal, and the provisions of Law 64 then apply as if the revoke had been established.]*

*[43B3: If dummy after his violation of the limitations listed in A2 is the first to draw attention to a defender's irregularity, there is no immediate rectification. Play continues as though no irregularity had occurred. At the end of play if the defending side has gained through its irregularity the Director adjusts only its score, taking away that advantage. The declaring side retains the score achieved at the table.]*

Three examples will illustrate the items above. In all three, dummy lost their qualified rights (for example, by looking at a defender's hand).

**Example 1:** Declarer has the lead and starts designating a card to lead from dummy (out of turn). If dummy warns them, then either defender can choose if the lead will come from declarer or from dummy.

**Example 2:** Declarer has ♠ A98 ♥ 4. RHO leads ♠7. Declarer discards the ♥4. Dummy asks "No spades, partner?" Declarer must substitute the card played with a spade (the other card returns to the hand), and the revoke is considered established, despite having been corrected. The provisions of Law 64 will apply (one or two tricks transfer, but only from tricks made from the point of the revoke onward). Ownership of the revoke trick is determined by the legal card played. If the trick continued with ♠4, ♠A, ♠J, ♠2, declarer wins the revoke trick and will be subject to a possible two-trick penalty. When explaining the Law the Director should be clear about the different consequences if declarer wins the trick in their hand with a legal card or not.

**Example 3:** Defender leads out of turn. Dummy is the first one to call attention to it. *Play continues as though no irregularity had occurred*, which means that declarer has no options and the lead out of turn is accepted by default.

**Example 4:** Defender revokes. Dummy is the first one to call attention to it (before the revoke is established). *Play continues as though no irregularity had occurred*, which means that the revoke is corrected without penalty. If the revoke was already established before dummy called attention, there would be no automatic trick transfer (one or two trick penalty).

Examples 3 and 4 above are instances of the approach used in Law 43B3. Both sides are offenders in this situation. Although there are no normal remedial actions against the irregularity committed by the defense, if the defending side gains through their irregularity, the Director should award a split score, keeping the declaring side's result and adjusting the defending side's result to what would have happened if the irregularity was normally corrected.

On the other hand, if dummy draws attention to an irregularity by a defender and has not lost their qualified rights, then the Director should apply a procedural penalty to dummy, if appropriate, but the irregularity should be dealt with through the normal laws.

## **44 - Sequence and Procedure of Play**

See the official Laws of Duplicate Bridge.

## **45 - Card Played**

This is a frequent judgment ruling the Director is called upon to make, and it is one of the most difficult rulings for players to accept. It usually costs the offender one or more tricks. The criteria used are different according to the position of the player (declarer, defender, dummy).

*[45A. Play of Card from a Hand: Each player except dummy plays a card by detaching it from his hand and facing it on the table immediately before him.]*



Defenders should be especially careful when playing their cards. All the cards should be played in the same manner. Quitted cards should be maintained in an orderly manner, correctly pointing to the winner of each trick, and equidistant from each other adjacent card.

*[45B. Play of Card from Dummy: Declarer plays a card from dummy by naming the card, after which dummy picks up the card and faces it on the table. In playing from dummy's hand declarer may, if necessary, pick up the desired card himself.]*

*[45C3. A card in the dummy is played if it has been deliberately touched by declarer except for the purpose either of arranging dummy's cards, or of reaching a card above or below the card or cards touched.]*

**Example:** During the final hand of the 2003 Bermuda Bowl, Paul Soloway had doubled Lorenzo Lauria in 5♦. As play wound down, Lauria had already lost two tricks and still had the trump ace out against him - plus the losing ♥9 in his hand. With a singleton spade in his hand, Lauria had played the king from dummy's holding of ♠KQ to five. Soloway could have cashed the ♥10 to guarantee two down, but he played back a spade instead. Lauria's partner had left the table after putting down the dummy, so Lauria was playing the cards himself. Lauria apparently expected Soloway to cash his winning heart, so he pulled the ♠7 from dummy - which held only clubs and spades - realizing too late that a spade had been played. He tried to change his play to the queen, which would have allowed him to discard the losing heart and get out for minus 100. Hamman, who had started with the ♠J 10 doubleton, had played the jack to the first lead of the suit, and he covered the ♠7 with the 10. A tournament director was called, and the ruling was that the ♠7 was a played card, resulting in two down for minus 300. That gave the Americans a 1-IMP victory on the match.

*[45C4a. A card is played if a player names or otherwise designates it as the card he proposes to play (but see Law 47).]*

**Disagreement regarding the play of a card from dummy:** What to do when the Director is called because the players do not agree on what was the card called from dummy? *[ACBL Office Policy: In cases where*

*there is no evidence to the contrary TDs should rule in agreement with the "speaker". This would apply to cases where it is 2 to 2 or 1 to 1. Where all the other players (excepting the "speaker") have given SOME indication that they thought the "speaker" said something else, TDs should rule with the majority. In cases that are 2 to 1 it is material to which side the one abstaining belongs. When the "speaker's" partner abstains, there should be a slight tendency to rule with the majority. When it is a member of the other side abstaining, there should be a marked tendency to rule with the majority.*

*These are guidelines. Whenever there is substantial evidence, TDs should rule with the evidence. Committees have purview as these matters are questions of fact.]*

**Correcting an unintended designation from dummy: [45C4b.**

*Declarer may correct an unintended designation of a card from dummy until he next plays a card from either his own hand or from dummy. A change of designation may be allowed after a slip of the tongue, but not after a loss of concentration or a reconsideration of action (...)]*

The option to change a card played from dummy is limited to the situations where declarer named it. If declarer played the card itself, touching it, the card cannot be changed.

Most of the time declarer will claim inadvertency when trying to change a card named, and in their mind the call was “inadvertent” because they would never have played it. However, the fact is that they did name it, and to judge the call of the card as inadvertent the Director must judge that it was a slip of the tongue and not of the mind. [**ACBL Laws Commission**: *In determining “unintended”, the burden of proof is on the declarer. The standard of proof is "overwhelming." Unless there is such proof to the contrary, the director should assume that the card called was the intended one. If declarer's RHO has played and there is any reasonable possibility that information gained from RHO's play could suggest that declarer's play from dummy was a mistake, the director should not rule “unintended”. (...) The bottom line is that there*

*should be strong presumption that the card called is the card that declarer intended to call.]*

The overwhelming majority of cases where declarer tries to change a card they named are caused by a lapse of concentration or a change of mind.

**Example 1:** Dummy has AQ76 in a suit. Declarer leads the suit. LHO plays the King and declarer calls for the Queen. It's impossible to believe that declarer actually "meant" Ace when they "spoke" Queen.

**Example 2:** Declarer calls for a diamond lead from dummy, which does not make any bridge sense. When dummy reached for the diamond, declarer immediately tried to stop it. Furthermore, declarer is not a native speaker. The Director should probably consider the possibility that the call was a slip of tongue.

**Note:** In some situations where inadvertency is alleged declarer is simply getting ahead of themselves. In their mind, they are playing to the next trick. This does not make the call inadvertent either.

*[Office Policy: (...) For example, declarer has led his singleton to dummy's AK of an off suit. He plans to cash both and take a pitch from his hand and then play a trump towards his hand. Before he cashes the second high card from dummy he calls for dummy's trump and then wants to retract it as inadvertent. To be deemed inadvertent a called card from dummy must be solely the result of a slip of the tongue and not a momentary mental lapse. Hence, declarer's attempted change may not be allowed.]*

**Example:** Declarer has Ax in hand and Kx in dummy. Intending to eliminate the suit for a throw-in and endplay, declarer plays the small card from hand and calls for "small" from dummy. In their mind, declarer was playing the small from dummy for next trick, after playing the King for this trick. Not inadvertent. The moment that they called for a small card, they meant the small card, even if for the wrong reasons. The card cannot be changed.

*[45C4b. (...) If an opponent has, in turn, played a card that was legal before the change in designation, that opponent may withdraw the card so played, return it to his hand, and substitute another].* In this case, the withdrawn card is not a penalty card, and information arising from it is authorized for the other defender and unauthorized for declarer.

**Card played by a defender:** *[45C1. A defender's card held so that it is possible for his partner to see its face is deemed played to the current trick (if the defender has already made a legal play to the current trick, see Law 45E).]*

The criterion here is if defender's partner could have seen the card (the Director does not need to assess if they saw it or not). It does not matter if the exposure was inadvertent or not. Exception: A single card below the rank of an honor, exposed unintentionally (as in dropping it accidentally), is only a minor penalty card (Law 50B).

The Director should endeavor to reconstruct the action as closely as possible. In close cases, it's a good practice to use a joker, or some spare card, let the defender show the movement of the card, verify the position where the card could be seen, and see if all the players agree with that position. Often, the players will all come to a middle term between the position alleged on defender's first statement and a card flat on the table. If there is no agreement, the Director will need to use their judgment as to the position of the card. Then, if it is still close, let the player hold the card in that position and look at it from their partner's point of view to judge if they could have seen it or not.

When the Director judges that the card could have been seen by defender's partner, they should rule it a played card. If both opponents saw the card it is very likely that partner could have seen it, but this is not necessarily true all the time. A check on the movement of the card should be performed.

**Note:** Avoid having declarer or dummy state which card they saw. Ask them away from the table (and separately).

**Card played by declarer:** *[45C2. Declarer is deemed to have played a card from his hand if it is:*

- a) held face up, touching or nearly touching the table; or*
- b) maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played.*

It is irrelevant whether either or both of the defenders see the card. If the card is maintained in a manner to indicate declarer has determined to play it, the card is played. The time that the card was held in such a position is NOT a factor in deciding this type of case.

*[ACBL Laws Commission: The word "held" is not synonymous with the word "maintained." The two clauses of the law are intended to read separately. Declarer must play a card from his hand held face up and either touching or nearly touching the table or maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played. According to this interpretation, therefore, the fact that a card is in constant motion as it is being played and retracted is irrelevant to the director in deciding whether it must be played. As soon as a faced card touches or nearly touches the table it must be played. As well, a card maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played must not necessarily be nearly touching the table for it to be ruled a played card.]*

Since the exposure of one of declarer's cards only helps the opponents, the Director has some additional space to use their judgment in close cases.

*[WBF Laws Commentary: Declarer is allowed to discover that he detached the wrong card from hand and attempt to retract it. Such a card is not necessarily played, even if it has become visible to one or both of the defenders. Bringing the card to the table and retracting it in the same movement also does not make it 'played.']*

**Dummy picks up the wrong card:** *[45D1. If dummy places in the played position a card that declarer did not name, the card must be withdrawn if attention is drawn to it before each side has played to the next trick, and a defender may withdraw and return to his hand a card*

*played after the error but before attention was drawn to it; if declarer's RHO changes his play, declarer may withdraw a card he had subsequently played to that trick.]*

**Example 1:** Dummy has ♠KJ7 ♥J ♦- ♣-. Declarer calls for the ♠J, but dummy plays the ♥J. Dummy just revoked, by definition. If the error is noticed immediately, dummy puts back the ♥J and plays the ♠J instead. If RHO plays, for example, the ♦8 (discarding, in this case) and attention is now called to the irregularity, the ♦8 and the ♥J are withdrawn. Because the declaring side is the offending side, information from the ♦8 is authorized for the defenders and not for declarer (Law 16C).

**Example 2:** Dummy has ♠AT8 ♥J ♦- ♣-. Declarer calls for the eight but dummy puts the Ace in the played position (a relatively common mistake). The trick continues: ♠A, ♠9, ♠3, ♠6, and now the mistake is discovered. Dummy has to play the ♠8 (the card named by declarer). If declarer's RHO does not change the ♠9, declarer cannot change their card either (Law 45D1). The Director should carefully explain this, prior to rectifying the irregularity. Declarer's LHO can always withdraw their played card and change it with another, independently of the actions by their partner and declarer.

**Note:** The defenders don't have to have a bridge reason for changing the cards played to this trick (this is not like a misinformation situation). In the last example above, declarer's LHO could retract the ♠6 and play the ♠5 instead. The withdrawn cards are authorized information for the defenders but not for declarer.

It is possible, under Law 45D, to have a maximum of five cards withdrawn. This happens when dummy plays a card that declarer did not name, the trick is completed, there is a lead for the next trick, and now the error is discovered. Because attention was drawn before both sides played to the next trick, the play must be corrected. The card lead for the next trick is withdrawn, and we are now back to Example 2 above.

**Example 3:** Same setup as example 1 above. The irregular trick starts with ♥J ♦8 ♥A and now attention is drawn to the irregularity. ♥J is replaced with ♠J. Declarer's RHO does not change the ♦8. Declarer

cannot change the ♥A (see Example 2). However, if declarer has any spades left in their hand, the obligation to follow suit and correct the “revoke” overrides this. Declarer can have the ♥A withdrawn and a spade played instead (Law 62A).

***Dummy plays the wrong card, too late to correct:*** [45D2. *When it is too late to change dummy’s wrongly placed card (both sides have played to the next trick), the play continues normally without alteration of the cards played to this or any subsequent trick. If the wrongly placed card was the first card of the trick, then the failure to follow suit to that card may now constitute a revoke (...). If the wrongly placed card was contributed to a trick already in progress and dummy thereby has revoked, see Laws 64B3 and 64C.]*

**Example:** Dummy has ♠AJ7 ♥J ♦- ♣- and is on lead. Declarer calls for ♠J and dummy plays the ♥J. The trick continues ♥J, ♠8, ♥A, ♥5. One more trick is played before the error is discovered. The irregular trick stands as is. Declarer’s RHO did not “follow suit” to the ♥J (maybe they played a spade because they heard the call correctly and were following suit). If they had a heart in their hand the moment they played the ♠8, we would be deemed to have revoked on that trick (and the revoke would be established). [WBF Laws Commentary: *The TD, if called upon to rectify this type of irregularity, applies Law 64A (the Director awards an automatic trick transfer) when declarer is the revoking player, but 64C1 (the Director restores equity) when the revoking player is a defender.]* If it happens that both sides revoked, Law 64B7 applies, leading again to 64C1.

***Fifth card played to a trick:*** [45E1. *A fifth faced card contributed to a trick by a defender becomes a penalty card, subject to Law 50, unless the Director deems that it was led, in which case Law 53 or 56 applies]*

**Example:** Declarer’s LHO leads the ♠7 and the trick continues ♠7, ♠9, ♠J, ♠Q... ♠A (by the opening leader, “caught in the rhythm”). It doesn’t look like the ♠A was a lead to the next trick. Major penalty card. Note that this is a judgment issue. The Director has to assess the probable intention of the defender when they added a fifth card to the trick.

*[45E2. When declarer contributes a fifth card to a trick from his own hand or dummy, it is returned to the hand without further rectification unless the Director deems that it was led, in which case Law 55 applies]*

When declarer plays a fifth card, same judgment problem regarding a possible intention to lead to the next trick, but apart from that the card just goes back to their hand (or dummy's).

*[45F. **Dummy Indicates Card:** After dummy's hand is faced, dummy may not touch or indicate any card (except for purpose of arrangement) without instruction from declarer. If he does so the Director should be summoned forthwith and informed of the action. Play continues. At the end of the play the Director shall award an adjusted score if he considers dummy suggested a play to declarer and the defenders were damaged by the play suggested.]*

Dummy is certainly liable to a procedural penalty, which will hopefully be a lesson learned. However, there is no immediate rectification. Even if dummy points out a card and declarer plays that card, the Director must let the play continue. The director should stand ready to adjust the score in the end if, in their opinion, declarer had other less favorable alternatives. If declarer would have played the card suggested anyway, there is no reason to adjust the score.

*[45G. **Turning the Trick:** No player should turn his card face down until all four players have played to the trick.]* See Law 66 regarding the inspection of quitted tricks or cards.

## **46 - Incomplete or Erroneous Call of Card from Dummy**

**Proper designation of dummy's card:** *[46A. When calling for a card to be played from dummy, declarer should clearly state both the suit and the rank of the desired card.]*

**Incomplete or Invalid Designation:** *[46B. In the case of an incomplete or invalid designation, the following restrictions apply (except when declarer's different intention is incontrovertible): (...)]*



To correctly apply this Law the Director needs to understand the meaning and significance of the parenthetical clause above. Whenever there is an incomplete or invalid designation, like “play any,” or “ruff it,” or “Jack” when there’s no Jack in dummy, Laws 46B1 through 46B5 specify what to do in each case. However, this clause takes precedence. If a different intention by declarer is incontrovertible, that intention is what counts. Note that what is “incontrovertible” is a matter of bridge judgment for the Director to decide, and they will have to take that decision at the time of the irregularity because the play will need to continue with the play of a card.

**The classical example (from the WBF Laws Commentary):**

*Dummy*

♣KJ6

*Declarer*

♠6

♣73

Declarer is in 4♠ and has won 8 tricks, the last in his hand. ♣A and Q are not played yet, and there are still five clubs remaining in the defenders’ hands. He plays a small club from his hand, and West plays the ♣8. He starts thinking for a while, shrugs his shoulders and says: “I don’t know, play one.”

Defenders insist that dummy should play the ♣6, according to 46B5. However, declarer’s intention is beyond any doubt. When they said “play any,” declarer meant “either of the two honors.” Dummy will have to play one of the two honors, and that’s the choice that the Director should give to the defenders. They can decide if dummy plays the King or the Jack. Of course, by doing this declarer reduced their chances to 25% (if the ♣Q is onside the defenders will ask for the ♣K and if the ♣A is onside for the Jack).

**Example:** Dummy has ♠AKQJ2 and no side entry, playing no trumps. Dummy is on lead, declarer is void in spades. Declarer says “a spade.” There’s no doubt that declarer is cashing the high spades. Declarer’s intention is incontrovertible. A honor is played from dummy.

**Example:** Dummy has ♠A7432. Declarer leads the ♠K and says to dummy: “Play anything.” What declarer meant was “play anything small.” The defenders get to pick which small card they prefer from dummy, but they cannot force dummy’s Ace.

**[46B (...)]**

1. *(a) If declarer in playing from dummy calls ‘high’, or words of like meaning, he is deemed to have called the highest card of the suit led.*  
*(b) If he directs dummy to ‘win’ the trick, he is deemed to have called the lowest card that it is known will win the trick.*  
*(c) If he calls ‘low,’ or words of like meaning, he is deemed to have called the lowest card of the suit led.*
2. *If declarer designates a suit but not a rank he is deemed to have called the lowest card of the suit indicated.*
3. *If declarer designates a rank but not a suit:*
  - a. *In leading, declarer is deemed to have continued the suit with which dummy won the preceding trick provided there is a card of the designated rank in that suit.*
  - b. *In all other cases declarer must play a card from dummy of the designated rank if he can legally do so; but if there are two or more such cards that can be legally played declarer must designate which is intended.*
4. *If declarer calls for a card that is not in dummy the call is invalid and declarer may designate any legal card.*
5. *If declarer indicates a play without designating either a suit or a rank (as by saying ‘play anything’ or words of like meaning) either defender may designate the play from dummy.]*

**Special Bridge Jargon:** Much bridge jargon and many gestures have become an integral part of the game, and Directors are cautioned to recognize their validity. Expressions such as “ruff it,” “hit it,” or “cut it,” for example, all refer to playing a trump to the lead of another suit. “Hook it” designates taking a finesse. Similarly, hands or fingers pointing or swinging upwards mean play high, while “duck” designates

a low card. This list could be quite long, but these examples should suffice.

When declarer says something like “run the suit,” they mean “play one card of the suit at a time, starting from the top” (until they tell dummy to stop). This is highly irregular but sometimes happens.

**Example:** Dummy has ♠AKQJ5 and declarer says “run the spades.” It becomes apparent that one defender has ♠T9876. When dummy plays the 5, declarer says “no, no, stop.” Is the 5 played or not? [WBF Laws Committee: Being aware that declarers sometimes give an instruction to Dummy to run a suit and then leave him to do this without giving, as is procedurally correct, a separate instruction for each card, a question can arise as to when the second, or a later, card is played from dummy, since the Declarer is not able to stop play of the card once it is played. The committee ruled that the card is deemed to be played when Declarer’s RHO follows to the trick. However, the committee deprecates instructions given to Dummy in this irregular manner.]

## 47 - Retraction of Card Played

A played card may legally be retracted in a number of circumstances:

### ***[A. In Course of Rectification***

*A card once played may be withdrawn when required by rectification following an irregularity (but a defender’s withdrawn card may become a penalty card, see Law 49).]*

**Example 1:** Defender leads out of turn. Declarer requires the lead to be retracted (Law 56). The lead is retracted and Law 50D applies. Note that “card withdrawn” does not necessarily mean that the card goes back to the hand. In this example, it becomes a major penalty card and must be left face up on the table until all the effects of the rectification cease.

**Example 2:** Declarer leads out of turn. Either defender can request the lead to be retracted. The card goes back to declarer’s or dummy’s hand.

### ***[B. To Correct an Illegal Play***

*A played card may be withdrawn to correct an illegal play (for defenders, except as this Law provides, see Law 49 - penalty card). For simultaneous play see Law 58.]*

**Example:** A player calls attention to their own revoke before it becomes established. They must correct it (Law 62A). If they are a defender, the withdrawn card becomes a major penalty card.

### ***[C. To Change an Unintended Designation***

*A played card may be withdrawn and returned to the hand without further rectification after a change of designation permitted by Law 45C4(b).]*

### ***[D. Following Opponent's Change of Play***

*After an opponent's change of play a played card may be withdrawn and returned to the hand without further rectification and another card may be substituted. (Laws 16C and 62C2 may apply.)]*

**Example:** Declarer leads ♦T. LHO revokes and ruffs with the ♠3. Dummy holds ♦K32 and plays the 2. RHO, who holds the Ace, plays a small diamond. LHO notices the revoke and calls the Director. The revoke is not established yet, so it must be corrected (Law 62A). LHO plays a diamond. Law 62C1 allows declarer to change the card played from dummy. Law 62C2 states that if that's the case, then RHO can also change their ♦. However, any withdrawn cards by the offending side (the defenders) become penalty cards. Declarer withdraws the ♦2 from dummy and plays the King. RHO plays the Ace. There will be two penalty cards on the table: the small diamond played originally by RHO and the ♠3.

### ***[E. Change of Play Based on Misinformation***

- 1. A lead out of turn (or play of a card) is retracted without further rectification if the player was mistakenly informed by an opponent that it was his turn to lead or play (see Law 16C). A lead or play may not be accepted by his LHO in these*

*circumstances and Law 63A1 does not apply.]*

The most common scenario occurs when, before the opening lead, the wrong player is informed by presumed declarer or dummy that it is their lead. If this happens, and an opening lead out of turn occurs, the card wrongly lead is picked up without penalty. The right player leads. The picked up card is unauthorized information for the offending side (declarer) and authorized for the non-offending side (the opening leader).

In any situation where a player (defender or declarer) is not on lead and one of the opponents informs them that it's their lead, originating a lead out of turn, 47E1 applies.

The mention made to Law 63A1 (revoke established) relates to situations like when a defender revokes, declarer wins the trick, the other defender asks if it is their lead, declarer concurs, and the player leads. The fact that they played to the following trick does not establish the revoke because it was the opponent that induced the play (out of turn).

2. *[(a) A player may retract the card he has played because of a mistaken explanation of an opponent's call or play and before a corrected explanation, without further rectification, but only if no card was subsequently played (see Law 16C). An opening lead may not be retracted after dummy has faced any card.]*

### **Example 1:** Auction goes

|    |      |    |          |
|----|------|----|----------|
| 1♣ | Pass | 1♦ | Pass     |
| 1♥ | Pass | 2♥ | All Pass |

The opening leader's hand is ♠AK32 ♥Q76 ♦K82 ♣743, and the face-down lead is the ♠K. Now declarer tells the defenders that 1♣ may be short (0+). West wants to change their lead and calls the Director, who will allow the change.

**Example 2:** West leads face down. North starts putting dummy's cards on the table, showing only the ♣2. South tells North to stop and alerts the opponents for a wrong explanation. West calls the Director. The Director talks with West away from the table, after hearing about the misinformation. With the correct information, West would have bid the

same way, but would not have led the same card. The Director should also talk with East away from the table, to check if East would have done something differently during the auction. However, the Director cannot allow West to change their opening lead, because dummy started facing their cards.

*[(b) When it is too late to correct a play under (a) the Director may award an adjusted score.]*

**Example:** The conclusion of example #2 immediately above, where West would have led a different card, is that the Director shall ask the play to continue and adjust the score if the defenders were damaged by the choice of lead (caused by the misinformation).

### ***[F. Other Retraction***

- 1. A card may be withdrawn as Law 53B (Proper Lead Made Subsequent to Irregular Lead) provides.*
- 2. Except as this Law specifies, a card once played may not be withdrawn.]*

**Note:** In no circumstance can a card be withdrawn if the reason for the withdrawal does not fall into one of the items listed above.

### **Unauthorized Information from a Card Withdrawn by a Non-Offender**

When a player's infraction results in a non-offender legally withdrawing a card, the non-offending side is entitled to redress if the knowledge from the withdrawn card aids the offending side. If declarer is the offender, information gained by the defenders from their withdrawn plays is legal and authorized (see Law 16C).

## 48 - Exposure of Declarer's Cards

### *[A. Declarer Exposes a Card*

*Declarer is not subject to restriction for exposing a card (but see Law 45C2, Card Deemed to be Played), and no card of declarer's or dummy's hand ever becomes a penalty card. Declarer is not required to play any card dropped accidentally.]*

Note the difference between dropping a card (Law 48A) and inadvertently playing the wrong card (Law 45C2). When declarer drops a card they can pick it up. When they play a card, it cannot be changed (unless provided for in Law 47).

### *[B. Declarer Faces Cards*

1. *When declarer faces his cards after an opening lead out of turn, Law 54 applies.]*

After an opening lead out of turn, if declarer spreads or begins to spread his hand, they become the dummy, and the presumed dummy is the new declarer.

If declarer “plays a card” instead, the conditions for 47B are not met. Declarer picks up the card and the Director deals with the lead out of turn as normal.

If declarer exposes their cards after a lead out of turn face down (before the lead is faced), the play period has not started yet, and therefore declarer's exposed cards are treated as exposed during the auction (see Law 24D). However, there are no special consequences because the rectifications will not affect the auction, and declarer does not have penalty cards anyway.

2. *[When declarer faces his cards at any time other than immediately after an opening lead out of turn, he may be deemed to have made a claim or concession of tricks (unless he demonstrably did not intend to claim), and Law 68 then applies.]*

Declarer will be deemed to have made a claim or concession unless, in the Director's judgment, they were demonstrably not intending to claim.

**Example 1:** Declarer spreads all their cards after the opening lead and says, “I’ll let you play with open cards.” It might not be very orthodox, but declarer clearly did not intend to claim. Play continues (but perhaps a talk with the Director is in order...)

**Example 2:** Declarer spreads their cards after an opening lead out of turn. Law 54 applies (declarer becomes dummy).

**Example 3:** Declarer spreads their cards and says, “It does not matter what you play.” They are deemed to have made a claim/concession without a statement of how they would play. Law 68 applies.

**Example 4:** Late in the game, declarer’s LHO leads a suit distributed like this:

|   |    |     |
|---|----|-----|
|   | 87 |     |
| 6 |    | KJ9 |
|   | AQ |     |

RHO starts thinking, and declarer shows AQ to everybody. Declarer is clearly not intending to make a claim. Play continues normally. The declarer just spared RHO from further thinking.

## 49 - Exposure of a Defender’s Cards

*[Except in the normal course of play or application of law (see for example Law 47E), when a defender’s card is in a position in which his partner could possibly see its face, or when a defender names a card as being in his hand, each such card becomes a penalty card (Law 50); but see Law 68 when a defender has made a statement concerning an uncompleted trick currently in progress, and see Law 68B2 when partner objects to a defender’s concession.]*

The director is called to a table. There’s a dummy and an exposed card by a defender. The Director should first check what happened and how the card became exposed. If the players made a “ruling” before, Law 11 might apply. Was it led, or did it drop? Sometimes players will say “It’s a major penalty card,” but upon further inquiry the Director will



determine that the (small) card was dropped by accident, and therefore it should be a minor penalty card (Law 50). It might have been a card that landed on the table stuck behind another one, and declarer, trying to be helpful (!?), exposed it themselves. First of all, the facts. What happened? Then, the ruling. How to fix it?

There are two exceptions, both related to Law 68 (Claim or Concession of Tricks):

1. When a defender makes a statement about the trick currently in progress (such as saying, “It does not matter what you play for this trick,” to a declarer who is thinking), cards exposed or revealed by a defender do not become penalty cards. Law 16, Unauthorized Information, however, may apply.
2. When a defender exposes their hand while conceding a number of tricks and their partner immediately objects. In that case, no concession occurred, play continues, and the cards exposed are not penalty cards (but Law 16 applies).

**Note:** When an external influence is a dominant factor in the exposure of the card(s), the Director can and should use the possibility given by Law 50, in its first paragraph, of designating the card(s) as not being penalty cards.

**Example:** South spills coffee in East’s lap. In endeavoring to escape, East exposes one or more cards. No penalty should be given, although Law 16 will surely be applicable, and maybe Law 12A (for example if no rectification can be made that will permit normal play of the board).

## 50 - Disposition of a Penalty Card

**Definition of a Penalty Card:** *[A card prematurely exposed (but not led, see Law 57) by a defender is a penalty card unless the Director designates otherwise (see Law 49 and Law 72C may apply).]*

When the Director realizes that the players have agreed among themselves that a card is a penalty card, they should investigate how the card got to be

exposed, and be certain that no rights were jeopardized by the failure to call when the card was first exposed (see discussion of Law 49).

**Example:** The defenders may not be aware of the lead penalties to which the offender's partner is subject because the Director wasn't called in a timely fashion to explain the Law (see Law 11).

**The Director's Role:** The Director has the right to cancel a ruling agreed upon by the players and carried out before the Director was called to the table. The Director, when called about an exposed card, should assess all the facts, and then explain all rights and penalties involved with the exposed card before applying any rectification. The Director should remain at the table until all the effects of the penalty card are dealt with, and make sure that all the players understand their options and restrictions.

**Penalty Card Remains Exposed:** *[50A. A penalty card must be left face up on the table immediately before the player to whom it belongs, until a rectification has been selected.]*

**Major or Minor Penalty Card:** *[50B. A single card below the rank of an honor exposed unintentionally (as in playing two cards to a trick, or in dropping a card accidentally) becomes a minor penalty card (...)]*

A minor penalty card is a single card, 9 or lower, that is accidentally exposed. It is not an "accident," however, if a player plays a club instead of a spade by mistake.

**Note:** A small trump dropped accidentally is a minor penalty card (Law 50B does not make any distinction regarding trumps).

*[50B. (...) Any card of honor rank, or any card exposed through deliberate play (for example in leading out of turn, or in revoking and then correcting), becomes a major penalty card; when one defender has two or more penalty cards, all such cards become major penalty cards.]*

A major penalty card is a single card, 10 or above, exposed accidentally, or any card exposed through deliberate play (as in leading out of turn or correcting a revoke). If the same player has two or more penalty cards,

they are all major (the same defender cannot have two minor penalty cards at the same time).

***[50C. Disposition of Minor Penalty Card:***

*When a defender has a minor penalty card, he may not play any other card of the same suit below the rank of an honor until he has first played the penalty card, but he is entitled to play an honor card instead.*

*Offender's partner is not subject to lead restriction, but see E following.]*

When a defender has a minor penalty card, the only restriction is that when they decide to play a small card of that suit (9 or lower) it must be that card. Declarer cannot ask for the card to be played, and the offender's partner is not subject to lead penalties (but Law 16, Unauthorized Information, may apply).

**Example 1:** Defender's hand is ♠842 ♥K3 ♦A65 ♣-, contract is 3NT. The ♠8 is a minor penalty card. Declarer leads a club. The defender can discard any card from their hand, except the ♠4 or ♠2. If they decide to play a small spade, they have to play the ♠8. The decision is theirs alone, without input from partner or opponents.

**Example 2:** Same hand as above, same setup. The Director is standing by to avoid any accident but before the Director can stop them the player discards the ♠4. Now there are two penalty cards on the table, and both are major (see Law 51). The Director should bear some of the responsibility as well. Could they have stopped this from happening?

***[50D. Disposition of Major Penalty Card.*** *When a defender has a major penalty card, both the offender and his partner may be subject to restriction, the offender whenever he is to play, the partner whenever he is to lead.*

1. (a) (...) *A major penalty card must be played at the first legal opportunity, whether in leading, following suit, discarding, or trumping. If a defender has two or more penalty cards that can legally be played, declarer designates which is to be played.*  
(b) (...)

2. *When a defender has the lead while his partner has a major penalty card, he may not lead until declarer has stated which of the options below is selected (if the defender leads prematurely, he is subject to rectification under Law 49). Declarer may choose:*
  - a. *to require the defender to lead the suit of the penalty card, or to prohibit him from leading that suit for as long as he retains the lead (...); if declarer exercises either of these options, the card is no longer a penalty card and is picked up.*
  - b. *not to require or prohibit a lead, in which case the defender may lead any card and the penalty card remains on the table as a penalty card. If this option is selected Law 50D continues to apply for as long as the penalty card remains.]*

Declarer has no options when the player with the major penalty card is on lead (it must be led).

When a player has two or more penalty cards and their partner is on lead, see Law 51.

When declarer requires the lead of a suit and defender has none, or when declarer forbids the lead of a suit and defender only has that suit, the lead option was exercised. The defender can now play any (legal) card, and the penalty card that caused the lead penalty can be picked up and returned to the offender's hand.

**Penalty Card and Lead Penalties:** When a player is on lead and has a major penalty card, and their partner has a major penalty card too, what takes precedence, the obligation to play their own penalty card or the lead penalties that declarer can enforce? *[50D1b. (b) The obligation to follow suit, or to comply with a lead or play restriction, takes precedence over the obligation to play a major penalty card, but the penalty card must still be left face up on the table and played at the next legal opportunity.]*

**Example:** Declarer's RHO is on lead and has a penalty card (♠J). LHO also has a penalty card (♦5). The lead penalties take precedence, and the obligation to play the penalty card follows. Before RHO leads, declarer can:

1. Ask for a diamond lead. ♦5 is picked up. RHO plays a diamond if they have one. The ♠J remains a penalty card.
2. Prohibit a diamond lead. ♠J has to be led (this is the first legal opportunity to play it, so it must go). ♦5 is picked up. The prohibition remains while RHO retains the lead.
3. Let RHO "lead anything." Once again, the ♠J must be led, for the same reason as in #2 above. The ♦5 remains a penalty card.

The Director should explain the Law with the consequences applied to the particular situation and not leave it to the players to deduce how the consequences apply. This is especially important in complex situations where there is more than one penalty card. In the example above, the Director should say to the table, speaking directly to the declarer: "You can ask for a diamond lead. ♦5 is picked up, and the ♠J remains a penalty card. You can prohibit a diamond lead. ♠J has to be led. Prohibition remains while RHO is on lead. ♦5 is picked up. Or you can choose to let him lead anything. The ♠J must be led to this trick. The ♦5 remains a penalty card, and you get the same options again every time RHO is on lead and the ♦5 remains a penalty card."

**Information from a Penalty Card:** *[50E1. Information derived from a penalty card and the requirements for playing that penalty card are authorized for all players for as long as the penalty card remains on the table.]*

**Example 1:** West is on lead and has ♥KQJ7. East has ♥A3, and the Ace is a penalty card. South (declarer) says to West: "Lead anything." Because the Ace is exposed on the table, all the information derived from it is allowed for everybody. West can lead the ♥7!

*[50E4. If following the application of E1 the Director judges at the end of play that without the assistance gained through the exposed card the*

*outcome of the board could well have been different, and in consequence the non-offending side is damaged (see Law 12B1), he shall award an adjusted score. In his adjustment he should seek to recover as nearly as possible the probable outcome of the board without the effect of the penalty card(s).]*

Although the information related to the penalty card is authorized for the offending side while the card is on the table, if because of that information there is damage for the non-offending side the Director should adjust the score and remove any gain that the offending side might have received from the use of that information.

**Example 2:** Same setup as in #1 above. West leads the ♠7 after declarer says, “lead anything”. Because of that, East-West cash four spade tricks. Supposing that without the penalty card East-West would normally have made only three tricks, the Director should adjust the score.

*[50E2. Information derived from a penalty card that has been returned to hand (as per Law 50D2a) is unauthorized for the partner of the player who had the penalty card (see Law 16C), but authorized for declarer.*

*50E3. Once a penalty card has been played, information derived from the circumstances under which it was created is unauthorized for the partner of the player who had the card (...)]*

**Example 3:** Same setup as in example #1 above, but now South says “lead a spade”. The Ace of spades is picked up and goes back to East’s hand. Now the knowledge that East possesses the ♠A is authorized for declarer but unauthorized for the offender’s partner. Therefore, with KQJ7, West being forced to lead a spade would have to make the normal spade lead (probably the ♠K). Leading the small would more likely than not demonstrably been suggested by the unauthorized information.

There is no difference for a major or minor penalty card, in terms of information being authorized or not.

## 51 - Two or More Penalty Cards

**Offender to Play:** *[51A. If it is a defender's turn to play and that defender has two or more penalty cards that can legally be played, declarer designates which is to be played at that turn.]*

**Offender's Partner to Lead:** When one of the defenders has two or more penalty cards and their partner is on lead, there are two different situations to consider. Either the cards are all of the same suit, or of different suits. If the cards are all of the same suit, declarer can require or forbid the lead of that suit.

When declarer requires or forbids the defender's partner to lead that suit, the cards of that suit are no longer penalty cards and are picked up; the defender may make any legal play to the trick. If declarer forbids the lead of that suit, the prohibition continues until the player loses the lead (Laws 51B1a and 51B1b).

It's not explicit in the Law but declarer can also elect not to require or forbid a lead in the suit of the penalty cards, in which case the penalty cards remain on the table and the offender's partner can lead anything (including a card from that suit).

If a defender has penalty cards in more than one suit when it is their partner's turn to lead, declarer may either:

- Require the lead of one of the suits in which there is a penalty card. Offender's cards in that suit are picked up and are no longer penalty cards.
- Prohibit the lead of one or more of those suits. Offender's cards in such suit(s) are picked up and are no longer penalty cards. The prohibition on the partner will continue until they lose the lead.
- Not require or prohibit any suit (such as in "lead anything"). In this case, just as with a single penalty card, the player on lead can lead any legal card. The penalty cards will remain on the table; their play will be subject to 50A, and declarer has the same options every time the lead is with offender's partner and there are still any penalty cards on the table.

**Example:** South is declarer. West dropped the ♠A2 and the ♥7 on the table and therefore has three penalty cards. East is on lead. South can:

- Ask for a spade. West picks up the spades (which are now unauthorized information for East), East has to lead a spade. ♥7 remains a penalty card.
- Ask for a heart. Similarly, the ♥7 is picked up, East leads a heart and the two spades remain as penalty cards.
- Prohibit a spade lead. Prohibition remains while East has the lead, both spades are picked up.
- Prohibit a heart lead. Prohibition remains while East has the lead, ♥7 is picked up.
- Prohibit both hearts and spades. Prohibition remains while East has the lead, all the penalty cards are picked up.
- Not require or prohibit anything. East can play any legal card. Penalty cards remain.

## 52 - Failure to Lead or Play a Penalty Card

The Director should stand by until all the effects of a penalty card are resolved. For example, if a defender has a major penalty card and declarer plays the suit, the Director should make sure that, at their turn to play, the defender plays that penalty card. It's always the responsibility of the player and not the Director to be sure to comply with instructions given, but it's also a good practice to assist the players in accomplishing it. Once in a while it will happen that the defender does something else before the Director can avoid it.

**Example:** The contract is 4♥. Defender (declarer's RHO) is down to ♠A32 ♥K3 ♦- ♣- when the ♥3 becomes a major penalty card. Declarer plays a diamond, ruffed in dummy with the ♥Q. Before the Director can stop it, RHO overruffs.

*[52A. Defender Fails to Play Penalty Card: When a defender fails to lead or play a penalty card as required by Law 50 or Law 51, he may not, on his own initiative, withdraw any other card he has played.]*



Law 52B details what are declarer's options and defender's restrictions, when the defender plays another card instead of the penalty card.

Declarer can accept the play of the other card, and play continues (the original penalty card remains a penalty card). This is also the case if declarer played from their hand or from dummy after the irregularity, thereby accepting the play.

If declarer does not accept the play of the other card, the defender has to play the original penalty card, and the other card becomes a major penalty card.

**Note:** If the play of the other card is accepted, the first card maintains its status (if it was a minor penalty card, it will remain a minor penalty card) because Law 52B1c does not mention anything otherwise.

## 53 - Lead out of Turn Accepted

A lead out of turn at trick thirteen must be retracted. When the lead out of turn happens before that, and if the player who lead was not mistakenly informed by an opponent that it was their lead:

*[53A. Lead Out of Turn Treated as Correct Lead: (...) Any lead faced out of turn may be treated as a correct lead (...). It becomes a correct lead if declarer or either defender, as the case may be, accepts it by making a statement to that effect, or if a play is made from the hand next in rotation to the irregular lead (but see B). If there is no such acceptance or play, the Director will require that the lead be made from the correct hand (and see Law 47B).]*

Depending on the options chosen by the players, other Laws besides this one come into play (see example #1 below). The Director has to explain all the options and consequences to the table before proceeding with rectifying the infraction. It's a very bad practice to say "do you accept the lead" without explaining what happens if the player accepts or not.

**Example 1:** During the hand, South (declarer) is on lead. West leads out of turn. South does not accept it. West's card becomes a penalty card and South leads from their hand.

**Example 2:** Trick 13. East leads out of turn. Nobody notices. The board is scored, and players advance to a new round. Three rounds later one of the players realizes the irregularity. As long as it is noticed before the end of the correction period (Law 92) the Director should go back to the board and adjust the score with the correct lead at trick 13.

**Example 3:** South is declarer and leads out of turn. The Director is called. West accepts and East doesn't. When there is a disagreement, the Director should go with the statement of the player to the left of the lead out of turn (as per Law 55A). Although consultation between the defenders is not allowed, the Director offers the option to accept the lead or not at the table (there's no need to take the defenders away from the table one at a time).

**Example 4:** South is declarer, West is on lead (not the first trick). East leads out of turn. South can accept it. If not, then East's card is a penalty card and South has the options on Law 50 over West's lead (request a card of the same suit, prohibit a card of the same suit, or no restriction). First two options: East's card is picked up and is no longer a penalty card. If South prohibits, the prohibition remains while East retains the lead. Third option, East's card remains a penalty card.

**Example 5:** South is declarer. West is on lead. West leads and then East also leads, not having noticed West's play). West lead stands (it happened first) and East's lead is a penalty card (Law 50).

**Example 6:** South is declarer. West is on lead (not the first trick). East leads out of turn and then West also leads. The TD starts by offering South the option to accept the lead out of turn by East. If they accept it, West's card becomes a major penalty card. If they do not accept it, East's card becomes a major penalty card and West's card becomes the lead to the trick.

*[53B. Subject to Law 53A, if it was properly the turn to lead of an opponent of the player who led out of turn, that opponent may make his proper lead to the trick of the infraction without his card being deemed played to the irregular lead. When this occurs, the proper lead stands and all cards played in error to this trick may be withdrawn, but Law 16C applies.]*

**Example:** South is declarer and is on lead. West leads out of turn. South does not notice and leads from their own hand. South's lead stands, West's card is picked up and is unauthorized information for East (Laws 53B and 16C).

**Example:** East is on lead, North leads out of turn and then East plays a card. The Director must investigate if East was following to North's play (North's lead becomes accepted) or making a proper lead at their turn to play (in which case North's card is picked up and Law 16 applies).

**Example:** West is on lead and North leads out of turn. West plays a card. Here, it is clear that West is making the proper lead and there's normally no need to investigate further. West's lead stands and North's card is picked up like in the previous example.

*[53C. Wrong Defender Plays Card to Declarer's Irregular Lead: If declarer leads out of turn from either his own hand or from dummy, and the defender to the right of the irregular lead plays a card (but see 53B), the lead stands and Law 57 applies.]*

This Law is a logical extension of the principles above and can be explained with a simple example: South is declarer. West has the lead. South leads out of turn from their hand, and East plays a card. The irregular lead by South stands and as East played before their partner to the current trick, Law 57 applies. The 53B exception occurs when declarer leads out of turn and the defender on lead makes the proper lead. In this case that lead stands and declarer picks up the card.

## 54 - Faced Opening Lead out of Turn

This is one of the most frequent rulings, requiring the application of several laws, and the Director should be absolutely familiar with it.

When called because of an opening lead out of turn, the Director should first check if the offender led because one of the opponents so indicated (Law 47E1). Remember, too, that an opening lead by the declaring side may not be accepted, Law 24. Also, if there is a correct lead face down and an out of turn lead face up, independently of what happened first, as the face-down card is not yet played it should be picked up, and the Director deals with the lead out of turn only.

If 47E1 does not apply, the Director will give declarer the “famous five options”. These options are a result of the application of Law 54 and Law 50 (Penalty Card) because when declarer decides to have a lead from the correct hand, the lead out of turn becomes a penalty card.

*[54A. Declarer Spreads His Hand: After a faced opening lead out of turn, declarer may spread his hand; he becomes dummy. If declarer begins to spread his hand, and in doing so exposes one or more cards, he must spread his entire hand. Dummy becomes declarer.]*

Note that “begins to spread his hand” is not the same as “exposes a card.” If declarer drops a card after the lead out of turn, or plays a card, they did NOT become dummy.

*[B. Declarer Accepts Lead: When a defender faces the opening lead out of turn declarer may accept the irregular lead as provided in Law 53, and dummy is spread in accordance with Law 41. The second card to the trick is played from declarer’s hand. If declarer plays the second card to the trick from dummy, dummy’s card may not be withdrawn except to correct a revoke.]*

*C. Declarer Must Accept Lead: If declarer could have seen any of dummy’s cards (except cards that dummy may have exposed during the auction and that were subject to Law 24), he must accept the lead and the presumed declarer then becomes declarer.*

***D. Declarer Refuses Opening Lead:*** *Declarer may require a defender to retract his faced opening lead out of turn. The withdrawn card becomes a major penalty card and Law 50D applies.]*

Applying 50D, declarer can demand or forbid a lead in the same suit, or let the correct defender lead any card, henceforth the five options. The Director should also be careful in informing the players about unauthorized information implications.

**Example:** South is declarer, East makes an opening lead out of turn (♠A). The Director will say to South, “You can accept the lead, and in that case, you play from your hand after seeing dummy. You can also spread your hand. The lead stays, and you become dummy. If you don’t accept the lead, you can ask for or prohibit a spade lead from West. If you elect to do so, the ♠A is picked up and is no longer a penalty card. Same if you prohibit a spade lead, and that prohibition will remain while West retains the lead. You can also elect to allow West to lead any card, in which case the ♠A remains a penalty card, must be played at the first legal opportunity, and you get the same options every time West has the lead and the penalty card is on the table. While the ♠A is exposed on the table it’s authorized information for everybody. When it is picked up it will be unauthorized information for West and authorized information for you.”

**Note:** When giving the options to declarer, it is a good practice to not recite the Laws as they’re written, but instead adapt to the practical situation at the table, like in the example above where the Director refers to the ♠A and not to the “opening lead out of turn.” It’s always easier for the players to understand a ruling when the Director explains it in practical and easy terms that the players can relate to.

**Note:** If a defender asks if it is their lead and both their partner and the presumed declarer (or dummy) erroneously say that it is, 47E1 applies as if it were only the declaring side to wrongly inform the defender that led out of turn.

**Note:** Sometimes, a player will say something like “I accept the lead” before the Director has a chance of explaining their options. It is a good

practice to ask the player if they know what other options there are and confirm they do not want to hear them.

## 55 – Declarer’s Lead out of Turn

Law 55 states that either opponent may accept or reject a lead out of turn by declarer.

**Note:** If the lead out of turn was due to misinformation from an opponent, Law 47E1 applies (independently of who is leading out of turn, be it a defender, declarer or dummy).

**Note:** When declarer leads out of turn and a defender calls attention to the irregularity, it does not mean that the defender is accepting or refusing the lead out of turn. Both defenders still have all their rights, and the Director should be called immediately.

The Director should advise the defenders that either of them may accept or reject the lead. They are not allowed to consult. If one defender remains silent, the other’s option prevails. If they express different opinions, it’s the one in rotation following the lead out of turn that prevails. If both remain silent or do not care, the lead out of turn is not accepted.

When the lead is accepted play continues normally. When it’s not accepted, the card is retracted without further rectification and the player on lead will play the first card to the trick.

In cases where a player adopts a line of play that could have been based on information gained from their own infraction, the Director should award an adjusted score (Law 55C).

*[Example (from the 2017 Laws Commentary by the WBF Laws Committee): Declarer plays 4♠ with ♠KJ84 in dummy and ♠AT72 in his hand. After winning a trick in hand, he leads the ♠J from dummy. RHO does not accept this lead and declarer successfully plays him for the ♠Q.]*

*The defenders call the TD to complain that the lead from the wrong side might have revealed the location of the ♠Q.*

*Since most players would refuse to accept a lead from the wrong hand if it enabled a successful finesse, the TD adjusts the score.*

*The TD should also consider adjusting the score in the case where the lead out of turn was accepted by LHO and declarer then rose with the Ace, successfully finessing the other defender.]*

## **56 – Defender’s Lead out of Turn**

*[56. When a lead out of turn is faced, declarer may:*

- a) Accept the irregular lead as provided in Law 53, or*
- b) Require the defender to retract his faced lead out of turn. The withdrawn card becomes a major penalty card and Law 50D applies.]*

## **57 – Premature Lead or Play**

It is not infrequent that Directors get confused about the application of this law. The penalties on this law only apply in two very specific circumstances:

- a) A defender leads to the next trick before their partner has played to the current trick;
- b) A defender plays out of turn before their partner has played, for a trick started by either declarer or dummy

Also, even if a) or b) above apply, the penalties do not apply if

- Declarer has played from both hands or indicated a play from dummy. (A premature play by declarer from either hand is a played card, it may not be withdrawn.)

- Dummy has played a card on their own initiative or illegally suggested that it be played.

**Note:** A singleton in dummy or one of a group of cards in the same suit which are equal in rank is not considered to be automatically played.

When a defender plays out of turn to the current trick before their partner or leads to the next trick before their partner plays to the current one, the played card stands. If one of the two exceptions above apply, there is no further penalty, and play continues normally. Otherwise, declarer has four options:

They may require offender's partner to play (1) the highest card or (2) the lowest card they hold in the suit led. They may also (3) prohibit or (4) require offender's partner to play a card of a different specified suit.

**Note:** When offender's partner is unable to comply with the choice made by declarer, they may play any legal card.

## 58 – Simultaneous Leads or Plays

**Simultaneous Plays by Two Players:** *[A lead or play made simultaneously with another player's legal lead or play is deemed to be subsequent to it.]* If both defenders lead at the same time, for example, and one was the proper leader, the lead from the defender who was not the proper leader should be treated as a penalty card using Law 50 as a guideline.

**[58B. Simultaneous Cards from One Hand: If a player leads or plays two or more cards simultaneously:**

1. *If the face of only one card is visible, that card is played; all other cards are picked up and there is no further rectification (see Law 47F).]*

The rationale for this Law is that when only one card is visible, the second, concealed card does not create any information or cause any



damage. The player that played more than one card in such a way should be especially careful to not create a situation where a second card now becomes exposed.

Sometimes only one face is visible, and through the action of an opponent an additional face gets exposed. When this is the case, and because the last irregularity was created because of an action by the opponent, the Director should be lenient to the player that caused the first irregularity:

- If they are the declarer, the card exposed through the opponent's action is picked up without penalty.
- If they are a defender, the Director can decide that it is not a penalty card (Law 50). Law 16 applies in the following way: Because the defenders are non-offenders regarding declarer's infraction, the card exposed because of declarer's action is unauthorized information for declarer and authorized for the other defender.

*[58B2. If the face of more than one card is visible, the offending player designates the card he proposes to play; when he is a defender, each other card exposed becomes a penalty card (see Law 50).]*

**Note:** The offending player (and not an opponent) designates which card they want to play. Considering the potential consequences of the choice, the Director should not ask which card they wanted to play before the irregularity, but which card they want to play now that the irregularity happened.

**Example:** A defender accidentally plays two cards at the same time: ♣10 and ♣9. If they opt to play the ♣10, the ♣9 is a penalty card, and vice-versa. However, according to the definitions on Law 50, the ♣10 would be a major penalty card if the player chooses to play the ♣9, and the ♣9 would be a minor penalty card if the player chooses to play the ♣10.

*[58B3. After an offending player withdraws a visible card, an opponent who subsequently played to that trick may withdraw his play and substitute another card without further rectification (but see Law 16C).]*

This is a rare situation. A player accidentally plays two cards with the faces visible. The opponent next in rotation plays, and now the irregularity is discovered. The offending player chooses the card that they elect to play (the other one becomes a penalty card if they are a defender), and the opponent next in rotation can pick up their card and substitute it with another (Law 16, Unauthorized Information, still applies).

*[58B4. If the simultaneous play remains undiscovered until both sides have played to the next trick, Law 67 applies.]*

When a player plays more than one card at the same time and it goes unnoticed until both sides play to the next trick, the irregular trick will have five or more cards played and is therefore a defective trick, hence Law 67.

## **59 –Inability to Lead or Play as Required**

*[A player may play any otherwise legal card if he is unable to lead or play as required to comply with a rectification, whether because he holds no card of the required suit, or because he has only cards of a suit he is prohibited from leading, or because he is obliged to follow suit.]*

**Example 1:** Defender leads out of turn (♣9) against 6♠. Declarer does not accept the lead and requests a lead in that suit. The ♣9 is picked up and is no longer a penalty card. The proper opening leader is void in the suit. Declarer does not get a “second bite of the apple”. The opening leader can lead anything. They lead the ♦2 to partner’s Ace, and a club return allows them to get a ruff for one down. It seems that the defenders are profiting from the irregularity. However, Law 10C4 expressly states that they are allowed to, because the information being used was created by declarer’s choice regarding the penalty card, which

is authorized for the offenders, and not by the penalty card itself, which would be unauthorized.

**Example 2:** Defender has a penalty card and their partner leads the ♦J out of turn. Declarer does not accept the lead out of turn and requests a diamond from the defender with the penalty card. If they are void, the defender would be able to lead any legal card. However, the penalty card must be played at the first legal opportunity so the logical conclusion is that the proper leader will have to lead the penalty card (this is the first legal opportunity to play it).

**Example 3:** Declarer leads the ♦A. RHO plays the ♦2 before their partner. Law 57 applies. Declarer can request from LHO their highest diamond, their lowest diamond, a card of another suit, or forbid a card of another suit. Declarer counted the hand and, being sure that LHO is void in diamonds, requests a spade. However, declarer made a mistake and LHO has a diamond. As the defender is required to follow suit if possible, LHO will play the diamond (not a spade as requested).

## 60 - Play after an Illegal Play

### *[60A. Play of Card after an Irregularity:*

- 1. A play by a member of the non-offending side after his RHO has led or played out of turn or prematurely, and before rectification has been assessed, forfeits the right to rectification of that offence.*
- 2. Once the right to rectification has been forfeited, the illegal play is treated as though it were in turn (except when Law 53B applies).]*

**Note:** When it was the non-offender's proper turn to lead, see Law 53B. Their play stands and the offender's card, if not legal, is returned to the offender's hand without penalty.

**Example:** The offender leads out of turn the ♠J. The proper leader, their LHO, led before a penalty was assessed, the ♠J

would be returned without penalty to the offender's hand.

3. *[If the offending side has a previous obligation to play a penalty card, or to comply with a lead or play restriction, the obligation remains at future turns.]*

**Example:** South is declarer, West has a penalty card (♠K) and the lead is in dummy. Thinking that they are on lead, West plays the ♠K. South does not notice and calls the ♦J from dummy as a proper lead. Law 53B states that the ♦J is played, but the ♠K does not return to West's hand (Law 60A3).

*[60B. Defender Plays Before Required Lead by Declarer: When a defender plays a card after declarer has been required to retract a lead out of turn from his own hand or dummy but before declarer has led from the correct hand, the defender's card becomes a major penalty card (Law 50).]*

**Example:** South is declarer and is on lead but calls for a card from dummy. Defenders call the Director, who gives them the choice to accept the lead out of turn. East does not accept. The Director should inform the players that it's South's lead now. If East or West decide to play a card before South leads, that card becomes a major penalty card, as expected. However, it is hard to imagine how this could happen with the Director standing there and explaining the proceedings to the players.

*[60C. Play by Offending Side before Assessment of Rectification: A play by a member of the offending side before rectification has been assessed does not affect the rights of the opponents and may itself be subject to rectification.]*

**Example:** South is declarer. East leads out of turn. West says, "It's my lead," and also leads! The Director will treat the lead out of turn by East first, and the card played by West will be subsequently treated as a penalty card.

## 61 - Failure to Follow Suit: Inquiries Concerning a Revoke

*[61A. Definition of Revoke: Failure to follow suit in accordance with Law 44 or failure to lead or play, when able, a card or suit required by law or specified by an opponent when exercising an option in rectification of an irregularity, constitutes a revoke. (When unable to comply see Law 59.)]*

It's important to understand the definition of "revoke." A player revokes when they have one or more cards of the suit led and fail to follow suit. A player also revokes when they can comply with a lead penalty but fail to do so. For example, after a lead out of turn, declarer requests that the defender in their proper turn lead a heart. Having hearts in their hand, the leader plays a spade instead. This is a revoke. But the definition of revoke is even broader. Failure to play, when able, a card or suit required by law is also a revoke. Some examples:

**Example 1:** Dummy has ♠AK876 ♥- ♦Q654 ♣743 (12 cards). The opening lead is a heart, against 4♠. Declarer ruffs in dummy, and plays the ♠A. The players discover that a card is missing. The card (♥2) is found. Law 14B2 specifies that the card is restored to the deficient hand. 14B tells us that the card is considered to have belonged continuously to the deficient hand. Therefore, dummy could have played it to the first trick and didn't. This is a revoke. Yes, dummy CAN revoke!

**Example 2:** Late in the play, dummy has ♠82 ♥A82. Declarer asks for the ♥A and dummy plays the ♥8 instead. As dummy is required by law to play the card specified by declarer, failure to do so also constitutes a revoke.

**Example 3:** Dummy has ♠AKQ76. Declarer asks for the Queen but dummy puts the Ace in the played position. This is an innocuous revoke, but a revoke it is anyway.

**Note:** Even though dummy CAN revoke, there is no automatic trick adjustment when it happens (Law 64B3).

**Example 4:** During the application of Law 57A because of a premature play, declarer asks the offender's partner to lead their lowest heart. Holding ♥Q32, the player leads the 3. This is a revoke (the player was required to lead the 2). If it becomes established, the offending side might be subject to an automatic trick transfer (Law 64A).

**[61B. Right to Inquire about a Possible Revoke:**

1. *Declarer may ask a defender who has failed to follow suit whether he has a card of the suit led.*
2. (a) *Dummy may ask declarer [but see Law 43B2(b)].*  
(b) *Dummy may not ask a defender and Law 16B may apply.*
3. *Defenders may ask declarer and one another (at the risk of creating unauthorized information).]*

With the exception of dummy not being allowed to ask declarer about a possible revoke after violating Law 43A2, the only thing disallowed is for dummy to ask a defender.

Declarer is allowed to ask a defender if they are revoking, but is not required to do so, even when absolutely certain that there is a revoke. If declarer's best interest is to let the revoke get established, they are entitled to do so and there are absolutely no ethical implications. However, in some situations it might be better for declarer to decline the possible automatic transfer of tricks and immediately ask about a revoke before it becomes established.

**Example 1:** *[From "All you should know about revokes", by Ton Kooijman: South is declarer in 6NT. The lead is the ♣A, and dummy shows ♠KJT8 ♥AJT ♦KQJ5 ♣104. With ♠AQ9 ♥KQ83 ♦A872 ♣QJ in his own hand, declarer knows that he's going to be at least 4 off. When RHO plays a small spade to trick one, it looks like eight down. Out of disgust he asks RHO: 'no clubs?' RHO had four clubs!] RHO now has to substitute the spade with a club, the spade becomes a penalty card,*

and declarer simply asks for a spade lead from LHO (Law 50D2). Twelve “easy” tricks.

Generally speaking, infractions to Law 61B can be subject to a procedural penalty. There is also the issue of possible unauthorized information.

**Example 2:** Declarer opens in 1NT and plays 6NT. Dummy shows ♠QJ76 ♥AQJ7 ♦K2 ♣KT9. The opening lead is a diamond, dummy wins with the King and when a second diamond is played declarer’s RHO discards. “No diamonds partner?” might be carrying the unauthorized information that declarer has an unexpectedly long diamond suit.

## 62 - Correction of a Revoke

*[62A. Revoke Must Be Corrected: A player must correct his revoke if attention is drawn to the irregularity before it becomes established.]*

**Note:** When a player becomes aware of their own revoke, but attention is not drawn to it at the table, they are not required by law to correct it. However, and because the rectification for an established revoke (see Law 63) is almost always more severe than for a non-established one, a player should call attention to their own revoke if they notice it before it is established.

A revoke is corrected when the offender withdraws the card played in revoking and substitutes a legal card.

If the withdrawn card belonged to the unfaced hand of a defender, it becomes a major penalty card. See Law 50 for the disposition of a penalty card.

If the withdrawn card belonged to declarer or dummy, or was a defender’s faced card, it is replaced without penalty.

*[62C Subsequent Cards Played:*

1. *Each member of the non-offending side may withdraw and return to his hand any card he may have played after the revoke but before attention was drawn to it (see Law 16C).]*

**Example:** South is declarer in 3NT. East leads the  $\spadesuit 5$ . South revokes. West wins with the  $\spadesuit Q$  as North follows suit with a small diamond. West leads the  $\spadesuit J$  to the next trick. Now South discovers the revoke. As the revoke is not established yet (see Law 63), the revoke must be corrected (South replaces the revoke card with a diamond). West can replace the  $\spadesuit Q$  (maybe they have  $\spadesuit KQ$  and plays the K instead, to make the situation clear to partner) and/or the  $\spadesuit J$ .

*[62C2. After a non-offender so withdraws a card, the player of the offending side next in rotation may withdraw his played card, which becomes a penalty card if the player is a defender (see Law 16C).]* A withdrawn card by a non-offender does not become a penalty card. Any information arising from the withdrawn card is authorized to the non-offending side, but unauthorized to the offending side. If the non-offender chooses not to withdraw a card, the player of the offending side next in rotation is not allowed to change their card.

**Example:** South is declarer in  $4\heartsuit$ . East leads the  $\spadesuit Q$ . South revokes and discards a diamond. West follows suit and dummy wins the trick with the  $\spadesuit K$ . South now discovers the  $\spadesuit A$  in their hand. They must correct the revoke, playing the  $\spadesuit A$  and picking up the diamond without penalty (Law 62B2). If West does not elect to change their card, then North cannot change their card either and the  $\spadesuit A$  and  $\spadesuit K$  crash in the same trick.

The Director should be very clear. When explaining the rectification for a non-established revoke by declarer or dummy they should state that the revoke card does not become a penalty card, and that there is no further rectification, and if offender's LHO already played a card the Director should explain that they will be able to change their card without penalty. The Director should also mention that information regarding the replaced card is authorized for the non-offending side only. Finally, if a third card has been played to the trick, the Director



should tell offender's LHO that if they replace their card the next player can also substitute theirs.

If a defender revokes, and the revoke is not established when attention is called to it, before asking the offender to correct the revoke the Director should inform the table that the withdrawn card is a penalty card, with the consequences associated with it. If offender's LHO already played, their card can be withdrawn without penalty. If offender's partner also played, then if offender's LHO replaces their card offender's partner can also replace theirs, but if they do so the substituted card also becomes a penalty card (and if offender's LHO does not replace their card offender's partner cannot replace theirs).

The Director should always explain all the ramifications of the ruling before any rectification.

Note that if a lead to the next trick was made by the non-offending side but the offending side did not play to the next trick yet, the revoke is not established. Law 62 still applies and the lead to the next trick can also be replaced without penalty.

*[62C3. If both sides revoke on the same trick and only one side has played to the subsequent trick, then both revokes must be corrected (see Law 16C2). Every card withdrawn by the defending side becomes a penalty card.]*

Because, in this case, the Law treats both sides as offenders, any card withdrawn by a defender is a penalty card, and any withdrawn card is unauthorized information for all the other players at the table.

**Example:** South is declarer. East leads the ♣7. South thinks that East played a spade and “follows” with the ♠J. West sees South's spade and revokes “in solidarity”, playing the ♠Q. North follows suit. North wins the trick and leads the ♥A to the next trick. Now someone calls attention to the revoke(s). Both revokes are corrected. The withdrawn card by the defender (♠Q) becomes a penalty card. Law 62C1 only kicks in for cards from a non-offending side. In this case, as both are offending sides, no card played after the revokes is withdrawn.

**[62D. Revoke on Trick Twelve:**

1. *On the twelfth trick, a revoke, even if established, must be corrected if discovered before all four hands have been returned to the board.*

2. *If a defender revokes on the twelfth trick before his partner's turn to play to the trick, Law 16C applies.]*

**Example 1:** A defender revokes on the 12<sup>th</sup> trick before their partner has played. Offender's partner has cards in two suits. Because the card(s) played by the offender are unauthorized information for their partner, they may not choose the play that could possibly have been suggested by seeing the revoke card.

**Example 2:** South declarer. The position, after 11 tricks:

|      |       |      |
|------|-------|------|
|      | North |      |
|      | ♠J2   |      |
| West |       | East |
| ♠7   |       | ♥Q   |
| ♦J   |       | ♦Q   |
|      | South |      |
|      | ♠A    |      |
|      | ♥7    |      |

South plays the ♠A and West revokes with the ♦J. Unless East can demonstrate that they have a complete count of the hand at trick 11 and “knows” that South has the ♥7 and not the ♦J, they may not choose the play suggested by the unauthorized information (the ♦Q). Note that the Director cannot tell East that they are not allowed to play that card. The Director can explain the issue of unauthorized information, but after that East, at the table, can play whatever they wish. However, if they discard the ♦Q the Director might have to adjust the score giving declarer the last two tricks.

## 63 - Establishment of a Revoke

### *[63A. Revoke Becomes Established (...):*

- 1. When the offender or his partner leads or plays to the following trick (any such play, legal or illegal, establishes the revoke).*
- 2. When the offender or his partner names or otherwise designates a card to be played to the following trick.*
- 3. When a member of the offending side makes a claim or concession of tricks (...).*
- 4. When agreement is established (as per Law 69A) to an opponent's claim or concession; the offending side having raised no objection to it before the end of the round, or before making a call on a subsequent board.]*

**Example 1:** South is declarer and leads the ♦8. West revokes. North plays the ♦A and East follows suit. North leads a card to the next trick and after that attention is called to the revoke. Not established (no player from the offending side played to the next trick).

**Example 2:** Same setup, but now East leads out of turn to the next trick. Revoke established. A play to the next trick by a member of the offending side, even if illegal, establishes the revoke.

**Example 3:** South is declarer and leads the ♦A. West follows suit. Dummy is missing a card and is therefore void in diamonds, and revokes because of that. South wins the trick and leads to the next trick. Revoke established.

**Example 4:** South is declarer. West leads the ♣J. Dummy plays the ♣A. East follows suit and South revokes. South now calls the ♠K from dummy. Dummy's spade suit is ♠QJ765. Law 46B4 applies (there is no ♠K in dummy), but the revoke is established anyway because of South's illegal play to the trick following the revoke.

**Example 5:** South is declarer. West revokes. East claims. Revoke established. If West revokes but South claims, the revoke is NOT established unless East/West agree to the claim and raise no objection before the end of the round, or before making a call on the next board (whichever comes first).

**Example 6:** South declarer. West revokes in spades. East says “No spades partner? Then I guess we make two more tricks”. East asked West if they revoked but didn’t wait for the answer and claimed. Revoke established.

A revoke, once established, may not be corrected and stands as played (except as provided in Law 62D for a revoke on the twelfth trick or as in Law 62C3).

## **64 - Procedure after Establishment of a Revoke**

Law 64 classifies revokes into two categories, those that require an automatic trick adjustment, and those that do not. This Law also mandates the Director to award an adjusted score and restore equity if the non-offending side is insufficiently compensated after any established revoke (trick adjustment or not).

Note that “equity” is different from “automatic adjustment and equity”.

**Example:** A revoke causes a one trick damage and there is a one trick automatic transfer. The transfer compensates the damage caused. No further adjustment is warranted. Players will frequently seem to be puzzled because “the revoke is not penalized,” but this is a false issue. An established revoke is not “penalized”. It may carry an automatic trick transfer or not, and after that if the non-offenders are still damaged the score is adjusted to compensate for the damage. If a revoke causes a damage of four tricks, and the trick adjustment would be just two tricks, the score is adjusted by four tricks from the table result (restoring what would have happened without the revoke).

**Automatic Trick Adjustment (Law 64A):** This law differentiates between cases where the player committing the revoke wins the trick, or someone else does.

Generally speaking, if the revoking PLAYER won the revoke trick, that trick is transferred to the non-offending side. If the offending SIDE wins any other trick afterwards, an additional trick is transferred (two tricks total).

If the revoking PLAYER did NOT win the revoke trick, but the offending SIDE won that trick or any other trick afterwards, only one trick is transferred to the non-offending side.

If the revoking SIDE did not win the revoke trick or any other trick afterwards, zero tricks are transferred to the non-offending side.

**No Automatic Trick Adjustment:** There are a number of cases where 64A does not apply, and these cases are listed in 64B.

Note that independently of an established revoke falling under 64A or 64B, the Director needs to restore equity, by awarding an assigned adjusted score, if the non-offending side is insufficiently compensated (Law 64C).

*[64B. There is no automatic trick adjustment following an established revoke (but see Law 64C) if:*

1. (...)
2. *It is a subsequent revoke in the same suit by the same player, the first revoke having been established.*
3. *The revoke was made in failing to play a penalty card or any card belonging to dummy.*
4. *Attention was first drawn to the revoke after a member of the non-offending side has made a call on the subsequent deal.*
5. *Attention was first drawn to the revoke after the round has ended.*
6. *It is a revoke on the twelfth trick.*
7. *Both sides have revoked on the same board and both revokes*

*have become established.*

8. *The revoke has been corrected as per Law 62C3.]*

**64B2:** When the same player revokes more than once in the same suit, the automatic adjustment still applies to the first revoke. Equity is restored starting with the moment the second revoke occurred.

**64B3:** When dummy is missing one card and revokes because of that, equity is restored. Defenders are protected from damage caused by a card not visible in dummy, but declarer is not.

### **64C - Redress of Damage**

Law 64C1 provides that the offending side will not benefit, and the non-offending side will not be disadvantaged by a revoke. The Director is obligated to award an assigned adjusted score in those revoke situations where the non-offending side is insufficiently compensated by an automatic adjustment, and in those where there was no automatic trick adjustment, e.g., a revoke in dummy.

To restore equity the Director awards an assigned adjusted score (a real score), seeking to recover, as much as possible, what would have happened had the revoke not occurred. The principles laid out in Law 12 apply.

If necessary, the adjusted score can be weighted to account for the probabilities of a number of possible outcomes.

**Technical considerations:** When the Director is called to the table because of an alleged revoke, sometimes one or more players will not be sure if a revoke occurred or not. Law 61C is clear (a claim of a revoke does not warrant inspection of quitted tricks). The Director should not allow cards from previous tricks to be turned up in order to find if the revoke happened or not. If the revoke is already established (the players will say something like “Yes, the revoke was two or three tricks ago,”) the discovery process can wait until play is finished on the board. If it’s not clear if the revoke is established or not, the Director should inspect the last played cards, without turning them on the table. If they

determine that the revoke is not established, then it needs to be corrected and some cards will inevitably have to be turned in order to do that. Otherwise, the Director asks the players to finish the hand and stands ready to establish the facts and apply the proper rectification (if the revoke happened as claimed).

One easy technique that can be applied in many simple revoke cases is to ask the alleged offender if they agree that they revoked. If so, make sure that the revoke was established, ask if the revoking PLAYER made the revoke trick or not, inform the table of the corresponding automatic trick adjustment and ask the players to call back if the non-offending side is insufficiently compensated by the trick transfer.

## **65 - Arrangement of Tricks**

*[A. Completed Trick: When four cards have been played to a trick, each player turns his own card face down near him on the table.*

### ***B. Keeping Track of the Ownership of Tricks:***

- 1. If the player's side has won the trick, the card is pointed lengthwise toward his partner.*
- 2. If the opponents have won the trick, the card is pointed lengthwise toward the opponents.*
- 3. 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 may apply.]*

Law 65B3 applies to any player (including dummy). If a player draws attention to a card pointed incorrectly after their side played to the next trick, they are liable to a possible procedural penalty. The Director may also need to use Law 16B (Unauthorized Information), for example when they deem that the player could have called their partner's attention to a wrong trick count, eventually making them change their line of play because of it.

*[C. Orderliness: Each player arranges his own cards in an orderly overlapping row in the sequence played, so as to permit review of the play after its completion, if necessary to determine the number of tricks won by each side or the order in which the cards were played.]*

If a player does not keep their played cards properly arranged, their side may be in jeopardy when trying to establish how the play of the hand went, for example to determine if there was a revoke or not.

*[D. Agreement on Results of Play: A player should not disturb the order of his played cards until agreement has been reached on the number of tricks won. A player who fails to comply with the provisions of this Law jeopardizes his right to claim ownership of doubtful tricks or to claim (or deny) a revoke.]*

If a player disturbs the order of their played cards and a disagreement about the number of tricks won, or a possible revoke, happens to surface, the Director should in any case try to establish the facts as correctly as possible and not rule automatically against the player's side. However, if the two sides fail to come to an agreement, and the Director is not certain about which version is correct, they will routinely rule against the side that did not keep their cards in the correct order (see also Law 66D).

One interesting situation happens when players from both sides disturb the order of their own played cards, a disagreement happens about how many tricks were won or about a revoke, and the players fail to be able to reconstitute the play with a reasonable degree of confidence. For example, North-South claim that 4♠ by South was made, and East-West claim that it went down one. Nobody kept their cards in order, and the players can't agree on the order of play. The Director cannot give NS and EW what each of them wants (the result of the board would exceed significantly 100% of the matchpoints for no good reason). Because both are offending sides, the best solution is to assign NS a score of 4♠-1, and EW a score of 4♠= (a type of adjustment frequently designated as "bad-bad").



## 66 - Inspection of Tricks

*[A. **Current Trick:** So long as his side has not led or played to the next trick, declarer or either defender may, until he has turned his own card face down on the table, require that all cards just played to the trick be faced.]*

It is improper to request this inspection unless it is desired for the player's own information. If done with the purpose of calling partner's attention to a play, the Director can apply Law 16B (Unauthorized Information) and adjust the score accordingly.

*[B. **Own Last Card:** 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.]*

Applies specifically if a player already turned their played card face down on the table. This exception to the general rule stated in Law 66A exists in order to allow a player to check their own played card so that they can determine who is on lead, make sure there has been no revoke, etc.

*[C. **Quitted Tricks:** Thereafter, until play ceases, the cards of quitted tricks may not be inspected (except at the Director's specific instruction; for example, if necessary to verify a claim of a revoke).]*

Until play ceases, quitted tricks may not be inspected unless the Director instructs the players otherwise. Note that when a problem occurs during a hand the Director should always strive to avoid exposing cards played unless it is strictly necessary for the conclusion of the hand.

*[D. **After the Conclusion of Play:** After play ceases, the played and unplayed cards may be inspected to settle a claim of a revoke, or of the number of tricks won or lost; but no player should handle cards other*

*than his own. If the Director can no longer ascertain the facts after such a claim has been made, and only one side has mixed its cards, the Director shall rule in favor of the other side.]*

## **67 - Defective Trick**

A defective trick is a trick to which a player either failed to play a card or played too many cards.

- **Before Both Sides Play to the Next Trick:** A defective trick must be corrected if attention is drawn to the irregularity before a player on each side has played to the following trick.
- If a player has failed to play a card, they must supply a card they can legally play to the trick.
- If a player has played a fifth card to a trick, use Law 45E. The fifth card by a defender becomes a penalty card, unless the Director deems that it was led to the next trick. If it is a fifth card by declarer or dummy (not led to the next trick), it's picked up without further penalty.
- If a player has played too many cards to a trick because they played two cards simultaneously, apply Law 58B. If attention is drawn in time to correct it by having a player withdraw an extra card, the card must have been visible to be declared a penalty card. A card stuck behind another and withdrawn without the defender's partner either seeing its face or without the card being held in a position where defender's partner could have seen its face would not be a penalty card. If an extra card became visible because of an action extraneous to the defender who played that card (or their partner), the Director can apply the possibility of designating it NOT to be a penalty card (Law 50). For example, if declarer is trying to be "helpful" and causes a card stuck behind another to get exposed, or if it gets exposed because of an action by the Director while trying to sort out the facts, the Director should not call it a penalty card.

**After Both Sides Play to the Next Trick:** If attention is drawn to a defective trick after a player on each side has played to the following

trick or when the Director later determines that there was a defective trick (from the fact that one player has too few or too many cards in their hand, and a corresponding improper number of played cards), the Director establishes which trick was defective.

To rectify the number of cards, the Director should proceed as follows:

When the offender has too many cards in their hand (a three-card trick):

*[67B1a. The offender has a card of the suit led to the defective trick; he must choose such a card to place among his played cards.]*

*[67B1b. The offender has no card of the suit led to the defective trick; he chooses any card to place among his played cards.]*

In both cases *[he is deemed to have revoked on the defective trick and is subject to the loss of one trick transferred in accordance with Law 64A2.]*

When there are too few cards in offender's hand (a five-card trick):

*[67B2a. The Director inspects the played cards and requires the offender to restore to his hand all extra cards, leaving among the played cards the one faced in playing to the defective trick (if the Director is unable to determine which card was faced, the offender leaves the highest ranking of the cards that he could legally have played to the trick). Ownership of the defective trick does not change.]*

Note that the Director should avoid exposing any played cards. The inspection of played cards should be done without turning them over on the table.

*[67B2b. A restored card is deemed to have belonged continuously to the offender's hand, and a failure to have played it to an earlier trick may constitute a revoke.]*

The possibility of a revoke is similar to when a card is missing.

**Note:** If two or more cards were faced on the defective trick, the restored cards become major penalty cards.

**Example:** South is declarer. The Director determines that on trick 4 North played the ♠T and East played the ♠J and ♠K at the same time, but only the ♠J was faced (the King was stuck behind the Jack). South played the Queen and won the trick. The irregularity is discovered after both sides played to trick 5. Law 67A does not apply. 67B states that the ♠J (the faced card) is placed in the played position and the other card goes back into the player's hand (if not exposed).

If the Director was trying to determine which card was exposed, the fact that South won the trick is evidence that East exposed the Jack and not the King.

If the offender, at the table, announces the ♠A (not exposed) as in, "But I would have played the Ace if I had seen it," they just created a penalty card for themselves!

If the Director is in doubt about which card was played, they can pull each player away from the table and ask what card the player saw being played.

*[67B3. When the Director determines that the offender did play a card to the trick, but that card was not placed among the quitted tricks, the Director finds the card and places it correctly among the offender's played cards. The Director shall award an adjusted score if the same card was played to a subsequent trick and it is too late to correct the illegal play.]*

67B3 kicks in when a player plays a card and that card is not face down with the other played cards. It may be back in a player's hand, on the floor, etc. Note that 67B1 does not apply because, although the player apparently has an extra card, they did play it at the proper time. If the infraction is discovered without the card having been played again, there are no special repercussions. The Director simply places it among the quitted tricks. However, if the played card makes its way back to a player's hand and is played again, Law 67B3 specifies that the Director should still try to fix the situation and save the board. Note that the Law does not define when it is "too late to correct" the illegal play. It's up to the director to judge if the situation can be corrected or not.

**Example:** South (declarer) plays the ♠3 at trick 5. The card goes back into declarer's hand (things like this do happen) and at trick 9 declarer discards it on a diamond trick. West leads to the next trick and East recalls the ♠3 has been played twice. The Director can easily correct the situation (South puts the ♠3 among the played cards, plays another card, and the defenders should be able to withdraw any cards played after the infraction). Because 67B1 and B2 do not apply, ownership of a trick may change, and there is no deemed revoke either.

The longer it takes for the infraction to be discovered, the harder it is for the Director to correct the situation, and it's a matter for the Director's judgment if the board can be corrected or not. When assigning an adjusted score under 67B3 the Director should take into account what happened on the board up to the moment of the infraction.

**Example:** Same setup as in the example above, with the difference that the ♠3 was "led" at trick 9. The infraction is discovered on the 12<sup>th</sup> trick. It looks like the director will have no way to correct the situation. For starters, what was the lead at trick 9, if the ♠3 was already played four tricks before?! The contract was 3NT and South had lost five tricks before trick 9. To adjust the score the director should reconstitute the situation at trick 9 and determine the likely outcome of the hand if South had not given a second life to the ♠3.

## 68 - Claim or Concession of Tricks

For a statement or action to constitute a claim or concession of tricks, it must refer to tricks other than the one currently in progress. If a statement refers only to the winning or losing of the current trick, play proceeds regularly. Statements like "I'm ruffing this trick" or "I have the Ace" do not suggest that play be curtailed, only that players need not think too deeply about the current trick. In such cases, cards exposed by defenders do not become penalty cards, but Laws 16 and 57A may apply.

*[68A. Claim Defined: Any statement by declarer or a defender to the effect that a side will win a specific number of tricks is a claim of those tricks. A player also claims when he suggests that play be curtailed, or when he shows his cards (unless he demonstrably did not intend to claim - for example, if declarer faces his cards after an opening lead out of turn Law 54, not this Law, will apply).]*

**Claim examples:**

- A player intentionally shows their cards without any additional statement, at trick 8. What else could they be intending to do except curtail the play?
- Declarer states “I’m going to make ten tricks,” without exposing their cards. They made a statement that their side would win a specific number of tricks.
- A player exposes their cards with a statement specifying what line of play they will follow from then on. This is the preferred method for claiming.

**Example of a non-claim:**

- Declarer exposes their remaining cards and says to the defenders, “You can play with open cards.” None of the possibilities of 68A applies in this case. The player is just saving opponent’s energy on the hand.

***[68B. Concession Defined:***

1. *Any statement by declarer or a defender to the effect that a side will lose a specific number of tricks is a concession of those tricks; a claim of some number of tricks is a concession of the remainder, if any. A player concedes all the remaining tricks when he abandons his hand.]*

A player that returns their un-played cards to the pocket before the conclusion of play is conceding the remaining tricks (unless a different situation is clear to all).

2. *[Regardless of B1, if a defender attempts to concede one or more tricks and his partner immediately objects; neither a concession*

*nor a claim has occurred. Unauthorized information may exist, so the Director should be summoned immediately. Play continues. Any card that has been exposed by a defender in these circumstances is not a penalty card but Law 16C applies to information arising from its exposure and the information may not be used by the partner of the defender who has exposed it.]*

This is an extraordinary law on its own. When a defender immediately objects to their partner's concession of tricks, any cards exposed by the defenders during the process of conceding are NOT penalty cards, and the claim or concession is deemed to not have occurred at all. The play continues, and the exposed cards are unauthorized information for the defender's partner.

**Example 1:** South declarer. East shows all their cards saying, "I make only one trick." West immediately says "No, no, I also have a trick to cash." No concession occurred because West objected immediately. East picks up their cards, which are authorized information for South but unauthorized for West. Play continues.

**Example 2:**

|      |        |      |
|------|--------|------|
|      | North  |      |
|      | ♠      |      |
|      | ♥      |      |
|      | ♦ T754 |      |
|      | ♣      |      |
| West |        | East |
| ♠ 84 |        | ♠ J6 |
| ♥    |        | ♥ 83 |
| ♦ J9 |        | ♦    |
| ♣    |        | ♣    |
|      | South  |      |
|      | ♠ 97   |      |
|      | ♥ T5   |      |
|      | ♦      |      |
|      | ♣      |      |

South is declarer in diamonds, East plays ♥8. West concedes three tricks, showing the ♦J. East immediately objects, saying that West always scores both trumps. The claim/concession didn't occur, but East gave their partner unauthorized information (a line of defense that West was apparently not aware of). It would be careless for West to ruff with the Jack (or the nine). Three tricks for the declarer.

The fact that the claim or concession “did not occur” is important for example when a defender revokes, and their partner concedes before their side plays to the next trick. A claim or concession in this situation would normally establish the revoke (see Law 63A3), but if the revoking defender immediately objects to their partner’s concession the revoke is not established because “no concession occurred.”

*[68C. Clarification Required: A claim should be accompanied at once by a clear statement of the line of play or defense 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.]*

Keep in mind that failure to state a line of play does not in itself void a claim. The best method of claiming/conceding tricks is for a player to state a complete line of play and show their cards. However, players frequently omit the line of play, with statements like “all mine,” or make incomplete/incorrect claims. The Director’s job in these cases is to sort out the facts as they occurred at the table and, when needed, assign a score when there is an incomplete claim.

*[68D. Suspension of Play: After any claim or concession, play is suspended.]* (Play is actually finished, unless 68D2b below applies.)

1. *If the claim or concession is agreed, Law 69 applies]* (Board is scored. Agreement can be withdrawn in some circumstances).
2. *If it is doubted by any player (dummy included); either*
  - a) *The Director may immediately be summoned, and no action should be taken pending his arrival, Law 70 applies]* (The Director adjudicates the result of the board); *[or*
  - b) *Upon the request of the non-claiming or non-conceding side,*



*play may continue subject to the following:*

- (i) All four players must concur; otherwise the Director is summoned, who then proceeds as in (a) above;*
  
- (ii) The prior claim or concession is void and not subject to adjudication. Laws 16 and 50 do not apply, and the score subsequently obtained shall stand.]*

**Note:** It's explicit in 68D2 that any player (including the partner of the claimer, even if it's dummy) can contest a claim. Remember that dummy regains all their rights as a player once a claim occurs (unless play continues, as per 68D2b or 68B2).

Law 68D2b (new in the 2017 edition of the Laws) allows for the players to decide by themselves to continue playing the hand, but only if the request is initiated by the non-claiming or non-conceding side, and all four players agree (dummy included).

When the request is initiated by the non-claiming or non-conceding side, and all four players agree to play the hand out, then the previous claim or concession is canceled. The play proceeds as though there had been no claim or concession. Should this occur, there is no unauthorized information, and there are no penalty cards. Any claim statement is voided, and the claimer is free to choose an alternate line of play. All players can use the information from the cards that they saw.

If the Director is called to the table, 68D2b is off. The Director should not offer this option to the players and should deny it to the players if they ask it. 68D2 splits into two separate possibilities. Either the Director is called (68D2a) or the players decide to play it out by the initiative of the non-claiming side (68D2b). By calling the Director, the non-claiming side has already chosen not to exercise their right to play the hand out.

**Note:** 68D does not include the possibility of the claiming side taking the initiative to play out the hand. This implies that if it happens, even if the hand is played out, agreement has not been established yet, and the

play of the hand after the claim is not recognized by this law. If the players finish the hand and after that one of the players contests it, the situation is basically like if the claim was immediately contested the moment it occurred. The play that occurred after the claim is voided and the Director adjudicates the result on the board.

Note also that “contesting a claim” (Law 70) is not equivalent to “withdrawing the agreement to a claim” (Law 69B), and the criteria used to rule in either case are different. Also, it’s important to understand that “agreement” on a claim has a specific definition (Law 69). When the opponents assent to a claim, agreement has not necessarily occurred yet (see Law 69).

## **69 - Agreed Claim or Concession**

*[A. Establishment of Agreement: Agreement is established when a side assents to an opponent’s claim or concession and raises no objection to it before making a call on a subsequent board or before the round ends, whichever occurs first. The board is scored as though the tricks claimed or conceded had been won or lost in play.]*

**Example:** A player claims a certain number of tricks on the first board of the round. The opponents agree. The second board is placed on the table. The claimer opens the bidding. Now the opponents raise an objection to the claim. Agreement is not established yet, and the situation is like if the objection had been raised immediately (Law 70). If one of the opponents had already called before raising the objection to the claim, agreement was established, and the Director would rule on the claim as per Law 69B.

*[B. Withdrawal of Established Agreement: Agreement with a claim or concession (see A) may be withdrawn within the Correction Period established under Law 79C if a player agreed to the loss of a trick his side won or if a player has agreed to the loss of a trick that his side would likely have won had the play continued. The board is rescored with such trick awarded to his side.]*

When agreement to a claim is withdrawn, the Director must use their judgment to decide if it would be likely or not for the objecting player to win a trick that they agreed to lose. In case of doubt, the criterion used by the Director leans against the objecting player.

**Example:** South claims four tricks. Their final four cards are ♠AT96 facing ♠KJ87 (no spades have been played yet). Opponents agree, nobody raises an objection, and two boards later West realizes that South still has a two-way finesse for the Queen and calls the Director. If the objection had been raised in time to apply Law 70, South would lose between two and four tricks, depending on the position of the cards and on what the Director would judge as equitable, giving the benefit of the doubt to the non-claiming side. As the objection was raised after agreement is established, the benefit of the doubt goes in favor of the claiming side. Is it likely that the defenders score the ♠Q (or other tricks)? It's possible, depending on the line that South might chose. But it's also possible that South would get it right. The benefit of the doubt tilts the decision in South's favor. All tricks for South.

## 70 - Contested Claim or Concession

If the Director is summoned after a claim or concession is contested, play immediately ceases and the Director must decide who wins the remaining tricks.

*[70A. General Objective: In ruling on a contested claim or concession, the Director adjudicates the result of the board as equitably as possible to both sides, but any doubtful point as to a claim shall be resolved against the claimer. (...)]*

*[70B. Clarification Statement Repeated:*

- 1. The Director requires claimer to repeat the clarification statement he made at the time of his claim.*
- 2. Next, the Director hears the opponents' objections to the claim (but the Director's considerations are not limited only to the opponents' objections).*

3. *The Director may require players to put their remaining cards face up on the table.]*

**[70D. Director's Considerations:**

1. *The Director shall not accept from claimer any successful line of play not embraced in the original clarification statement if there is an alternative normal line of play that would be less successful.*
2. *The Director does not accept any part of a defender's claim that depends on his partner selecting a particular play from among alternative normal plays.]*

When the Director is summoned and it becomes clear that the call is about a contested claim or concession, the Director should:

Confirm that a claim/concession was made.

1. Ask the claimer to repeat the statement made at the moment of the claim. When a claim statement is incomplete it's frequent that the claimer adds content to the statement, and the Director should try to separate the original statement from the incremental information. Confirm with the opponents if the statement is accurate.
2. Ask all the players to put the un-played cards face up on the table.
3. Ask the opponents to explain any objections to the claim
4. If necessary, register the auction and play up to the moment of the claim. This might be crucial to evaluate the merit of a proposed line of play.

Note that the Director should adjudicate the result of the board as equitably as possible to both sides. An objection to a claim does not have any merit if it demands, for example, that declarer plays small from both hands when they have Ax in front of Kx. Saying that the Director adjudicates the result of the board equitably means that they will have to judge what would likely have happened assuming that the play would

continue in a normal way. However, when a doubtful point arises, the Director will routinely decide against the claiming side. This implies that the Director cannot assign a weighted score on a claim. The decision must be a single bridge result.

All the possibilities in Law 70, about the way that the TD should decide on a contested claim, are fundamentally centered on the concept that the claimer is bound to "normal" lines of play (including inferior or careless, but not irrational plays). In this context, irrational is for example revoking, under ruffing to their disadvantage or throwing winners away like candies. But it is not irrational to forget about a winner on defense, or miscount a hand (especially with less experienced players). It is assumed that declarer would have seen the cards as they were played had they not claimed and take that into account.

When the claim is just worded poorly, but is essentially correct, the Director should allow it (for example, when declarer has five discards in dummy but says that they will discard only four of the losing clubs from their hand, they are usually not stating that they will masochistically keep a losing club in their hand. Most often they just misspoke and meant to discard the five clubs). The Director must be aware and use common sense to distinguish between poor wording and poor claiming.

If there is one trump out, and claimer made no statement about that trump, and it is at all likely that at the time of the claim declarer was unaware that a trump remained in an opponent's hand, and a trick could be lost to that trump by any normal play, then the claimer loses that trick.

The Director shall not accept from the claimer:

1. Any successful line of play not embraced in the original statement if there is an alternative normal (inferior or careless) line of play that would be less successful.
2. Any unstated line of play the success of which depends upon finding one opponent rather than the other with a particular card, unless an opponent failed to follow to that suit previously, or would subsequently fail to follow to that suit on any normal

(inferior or careless) line of play, or unless failure to adopt that line of play would be irrational.

3. Any part of a defender's claim that depends on their partner's selecting a particular play from among alternative normal (inferior or careless) plays.

Points (1) and (2) above can be explained like this: If a declarer claims "all mine" with AJ97 in front of KT86 and no indication of the whereabouts of the Queen, they are deemed to finesse the wrong way and lose one trick (the least successful line). Regarding point (3), a defender cannot claim saying something like "...and my partner will obviously unblock his Queen so that I can cash my JT." Their partner might be careless and not unblock!

When there is an irregularity embodied in a statement of claim the Director follows the statement up to the point at which the irregularity (as for example a revoke) occurs and, since the irregularity is not to be accepted, rules from that point as though there were no statement of claim but should take into account any later part of the claim that they consider to still be valid.

Adjudicating contested claims requires judgment skills from the Director and may be subject to appeal. The Director's decision may take into account the quality of the players involved. What is judged to be a "normal line of play" may differ for players of significantly different levels. This does not mean that the Director is favoring one side or the other; it only means that the line separating "normal" and "beyond careless or inferior for the class of player involved" is drawn on different places in the sand.

In difficult situations, it is advisable to seek opinions from other Directors or knowledgeable players. Occasionally, a point will be missed by even the most experienced Director.

Dealing with situations where there is a claim with outstanding trumps, the ACBL Laws Commission issued the following (Memphis, 2019):

*[We note that whenever there is an attempt to establish guidelines, there is a risk that some will use them in lieu of common sense or even of law. Guidelines are not laws but are intended to form a basis for consistency. With this in mind, the following are given as guidelines concerning claims:]*

- a) The order of play of non-trump suits should be the worst possible for claimer (although play within the any suit is normally from the top down).*
- b) Declarer may never attempt to draw any trumps of which he was likely unaware, if doing so would be to his advantage.*
- c) It is not considered a normal play for declarer to take a safety check with a "high" trump, nor to play trump to put pressure on a defender.*
- d) Declarer should not be forced to play the remainder of his trumps to his disadvantage if both opponents have shown out of the suit.*
- e) When ruffing, claimer is normally presumed to ruff as low as possible.]*

Here are a few situations to help understand how to deal with claims and concessions:

**Example 1:**

|       |          |      |
|-------|----------|------|
|       | Dummy    |      |
|       | ♠ -      |      |
|       | ♥ 3 2    |      |
|       | ♦ 3 2    |      |
|       | ♣ 2      |      |
| West  |          | East |
| ♠ 3   |          | ♠ -  |
| ♥ 6 4 |          | ♥ AK |
| ♦ 6 4 |          | ♦ QJ |
| ♣ -   |          | ♣ J  |
|       | Declarer |      |

♠ A K Q J 2  
 ♥ -  
 ♦ -  
 ♣ -

Spades are trump; the lead is in dummy and declarer claims with no explanation. If, after questioning declarer, the Director feels there is a possibility that declarer was unaware of the outstanding trump, a trick should be awarded to the defense, because if declarer has forgotten about the trump, they may choose to ruff the ♣ 2 with the ♠ 2 and West could overruff.

**Example 2:** Same setup as in Example 1, but the lead is in declarer's hand. Declarer claims with no explanation. The Director should allow declarer to win all the remaining trumps. Even if declarer forgot about the outstanding trump, they would never play the trumps starting with the deuce.

**Example 3:** Same setup again, but the East and West hands are reversed, and the lead is in dummy. The claim would be allowed because it would be irrational for declarer to underruff if East ruffed the ♣ 2 with the ♠ 3.

**Example 4:**

|        |           |        |
|--------|-----------|--------|
|        | Dummy     |        |
|        | ♠ -       |        |
|        | ♥ -       |        |
|        | ♦ -       |        |
|        | ♣ KQT5432 |        |
| West   |           | East   |
| ♠ -    |           | ♠ K32  |
| ♥ J97  |           | ♥ Q632 |
| ♦ -    |           | ♦ -    |
| ♣ J987 |           | ♣ -    |
|        | Declarer  |        |
|        | ♠ J764    |        |
|        | ♥ 8       |        |
|        | ♦ -       |        |



♣ A6

Declarer plays 3NT, is on lead, and shows his hand, claiming seven club tricks. Since East would fail to follow suit in the first round of clubs, declarer would be allowed to take the finesse and win all seven tricks. It goes without saying that if the defenders argue that declarer might start with the ♣6 to the King, blocking the suit, this line of play would be deemed beyond careless or inferior for the class of player involved.

**Example 5:**

|      |          |        |
|------|----------|--------|
|      | Dummy    |        |
|      | ♠ KQT52  |        |
| West |          | East   |
| ♠ -  |          | ♠ J643 |
|      | Declarer |        |
|      | ♠ A987   |        |

In most levels of play, declarer's claim of five spade tricks would not be allowed because they might carelessly lead first to the ♠A. But, if the East-West were reversed the claim would be allowed. Whether or not dummy or declarer cashed an honor first, the suit is played for no loser. At the top level, where this security play is standard, and if the Director is convinced that the declarer is not asleep but perfectly aware of the position, the board might be adjudicated with all five tricks to declarer.

**Example 6:**

|      |       |      |
|------|-------|------|
|      | North |      |
|      | ♠AQ   |      |
|      | ♥32   |      |
|      | ♦ -   |      |
|      | ♣ -   |      |
| West |       | East |
| ♠ K2 |       | ♠ 53 |
| ♥ -  |       | ♥ K4 |
| ♦ AQ |       | ♦ -  |
| ♣ -  |       | ♣ -  |
|      | South |      |

♠ -  
♥ AQ  
♦ K2  
♣ -

Declarer (South) is declarer in 3NT. They play the ♥A. West discards the ♠2. Now South claims saying (to East), "You make the King next and then you have to play spades towards dummy." Upon inspection of all cards, East argues that we can crash the ♥K under the ♥A. It doesn't matter if East would find the play in the real world. The opponents of a claimer cannot "order" the claimer to play the cards in a specific order, but they themselves can be brilliant with open cards for a little while (until they call on a subsequent board or the round ends). They could even assent to the statement and later realize that they would be entitled to two tricks, as long as they do it before the limits above (Law 69A), because the agreement is not established yet and therefore the Director should rule as if the claim had been contested immediately. Two tricks for the defenders.

## 71 - Concession Canceled

*[A concession must stand, once made, except that within the Correction Period established under Law 79C the Director shall cancel a concession if a player conceded a trick his side had, in fact, won, or a trick that could not be lost by any normal play of the remaining cards.*

*The board is rescored with such trick awarded to his side.]*

Once again, "normal" includes careless or inferior play.

**Example:** South is playing a ♥ contract. West is on lead.

North

♠ 6

♥ K

South

♠ 7

♥ J

South gives up and concedes a spade. The opponents agree and put the cards away. South eventually realizes that West's hand is ♠32 and is forced to give a ruff and sluff. South wants to cancel the concession. The Director should give South the last two tricks, because the trick could not be lost by any normal play of the remaining cards. Regarding West's willingness to accept the spade trick, they might be in jeopardy regarding Law 79A2 (unless they can convince the Director that they really did not notice the ruff and sluff).

**Note:** Every club should have established time limits for the end of the correction period referred to in Law 79C. Many clubs who have games only once a week establish the start of the next week's game as the end of the correction period for score corrections. This gives the players a full week to check for errors in the score, but it is too long a time to apply, for example, to canceling concessions because memories have had time to fade.

## CHAPTER VII - PROPRIETIES

### 72 – General Principles

*[A. Observance of Laws: Duplicate bridge tournaments should be played in strict accordance with the Laws. The chief object is to obtain a higher score than other contestants while complying with the lawful procedures and ethical standards set out in these laws.]*

Players should strive for a higher score than their opponents at all times. Failure to do so (by dumping, or gratuitous psyching, for example) is an infraction of this law.

*[B. Infraction of Law:*

1. *A player must not infringe a law intentionally, even if there is a prescribed rectification he is willing to accept.]*

**Example:** A player cannot knowingly revoke hoping the opponents won't notice so you will gain a trick, but if they do notice you just give it back and you are back to even.

2. *[In general, there is no obligation to draw attention to an infraction of law committed by one's own side (but see Law 20F for a mistaken explanation and see Laws 62A and 79A2).*
3. *A player may not attempt to conceal an infraction, as by committing a second revoke, concealing a card involved in a revoke or mixing the cards prematurely.]*

**Example:** A player does not need to call attention to their own revoke (72B2), but they may not try to hide it, by concealing their cards, for example (72B3).

*[C. Awareness of Potential Damage: If the Director determines that an offender could have been aware at the time of his irregularity that it could well damage the non-offending side, he shall require the auction and play to continue (if not completed). At the conclusion of play, the Director awards an adjusted score if he considers the offending side has gained an advantage through the irregularity.]*

This Law formerly dealt only with an enforced pass; it now addresses all irregularities. It's referred to frequently but rarely applied. The key phrase in this law is "...an offender could have been aware at the time of his irregularity that it could well damage the non-offending side..." The Director does not need to decide if the player "knew," but only if they "could have known at the time of the infraction.". Even so, most cases do not meet this requirement. The mere fact that the non-offenders achieve a poor score after an irregularity does not entitle them to rectification. Two examples may make these points clearer:

**Example 1:**

|    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|
| N  | E  | S  | W  |
| 1♠ | 2♥ | 4♥ | 5♥ |
| 5♠ |    |    |    |

At this point, West leads. West's hand: ♠AQ5 ♥9432 ♦9432 ♣92

Law 24 applies, East is barred from the auction, which continues with

|      |      |      |     |
|------|------|------|-----|
|      | Pass | Pass | Dbl |
| Pass | Pass | Pass |     |

After North goes two down, they call the Director complaining about West's lead, forcing East to pass and not consider a possible (phantom) sacrifice.

It should be deemed that West could have known that it would be beneficial to their side to have their partner barred from the auction, and the Director should be prepared to adjust the score.

**Note:** The Director (and the opponents) should carefully avoid saying that the player "knew," because if they actually did know the case would become a serious ethical issue. The player should be presumed innocent, even if the decision is against them. Of course, this hand would clearly deserve a player memo.

**Example 2:** West dealer, but South "decides" to start the auction with 1♦. Not accepted. The auction now starts with



It is each player's responsibility to maintain appropriate tempo at all times.

***[B. Inappropriate Communication between Partners:]***

- 1. Partners shall not communicate by means such as the manner in which calls or plays are made, extraneous remarks or gestures, questions asked or not asked, or alerts and explanations given or not given.*
- 2. The gravest possible offense is for a partnership to exchange information through prearranged methods of communication other than those sanctioned by these Laws.]*

A guilty partnership risks expulsion from the sponsoring organization. When a Director thinks that a partnership might be using illegal methods of communication, they should report the findings to the ACBL Recorder. If in a club tournament, the Director should also report them according to the internal club regulations (usually, to the Club Manager) and a report may still be made to the ACBL Recorder as the ACBL has jurisdiction to act in all cases “of alleged (i) cheating by use of signals, other unauthorized information or other forms of cheating or (ii) serious breaches of ethics” during an ACBL sanctioned event [*CDR 2.1.1d*]. The Director should NOT try to deal with the matter himself.

***[C. Player Receives Unauthorized Information from Partner:]***

- 1. When a player has available to him unauthorized information from his partner, such as from a remark, question, explanation, gesture, mannerism, undue emphasis, inflection, haste or hesitation, an unexpected alert or failure to alert, he must carefully avoid taking any advantage from that unauthorized information (see Law 16B1a).*
- 2. A penalty may be assessed against a player who violates C1, but if the opponents have been damaged, see also Law 16B3.]*

***[D. Variations in Tempo or Manner:***

1. *It is desirable, though not always required, for players to maintain steady tempo and unvarying manner. However, players should be particularly careful when variations may work to the benefit of their side. Otherwise, unintentionally to vary the tempo or manner in which a call or play is made is not an infraction. Inferences from such variations are authorized only to the opponents, who may act upon the information at their own risk.]*

Unintentionally varying tempo or manner is usually not considered an infraction. However, when a player varies their tempo in a tempo-sensitive situation, even if clearly unintentional, this may be considered an infraction, namely if the player could have known at the time that the variation might work for their benefit. The reason for this break from the maxim that “a hesitation is not an infraction” has to do with the need to restore equity, because if there is no infraction there cannot be a score adjustment.

**Example:** Declarer has a trump suit with eight cards missing the Queen and a two-way finesse. When they lead the Jack from their hand, LHO plays a small card from 764 after a significant hiatus, leading declarer into finessing the wrong way. LHO might be spacing out, thinking about dinner, or about the car keys, or they might unwisely be thinking about giving count (!) Either way, they should be aware that this was a tempo sensitive situation and not break tempo. If they had played in tempo, declarer might have got it right or not. By hesitating, LHO removed declarer’s winning option from the table. Law 73D1 allows the Director to adjust the score.

2. *[A player may not attempt to mislead an opponent by means of a question, remark or gesture; by the haste or hesitancy of a call or play (as in hesitating before playing a singleton); by the manner in which a call or play is made; or by any purposeful deviation from correct procedure (see also Law 73E2).]*

***[E. Deception:***

1. *A player may appropriately attempt to deceive an opponent through a call or play (so long as the deception is not emphasized*



*by unwonted haste or hesitancy, nor protected by concealed partnership understanding or experience).]*

Just as it is not allowed to try to mislead an opponent through actions other than the calls or plays made, it is entirely proper to avoid giving information to the opponents by making all calls and plays in unvarying tempo and manner.

Players need to take their time and plan the play after dummy is displayed and be aware of their tempo. It is entirely proper to play a singleton in normal tempo, but if a player's tempo is variable, then the singleton should be played in a way not to convey the impression that the player had other options. Also, when playing from a doubleton, it's usually not acceptable to think what card to play (once again, the card should be played in normal tempo).

Thinking about which card to play might deceive declarer and will frequently be considered an infraction. While the player may try to deceive with the card played, they may not with the tempo (which tends to carry the information that there are meaningful alternative plays available).

2. *[If the Director determines that an innocent player has drawn a false inference from a question, remark, manner, tempo or the like, of an opponent who has no demonstrable bridge reason for the action, and who could have been aware, at the time of the action, that it could work to his benefit, the Director shall award an adjusted score.]*

**Example:** LHO leads the K in a suit where declarer holds A7532. Declarer asks RHO, "What do you lead with AK(xx)?" The defenders draw a wrong inference regarding the possession of the Ace and blow one trick in defense. Director!

The ACBL Laws Commission (Denver, 2015) discussed under what circumstances a Declarer may ask about the defenders' lead agreements. For example, may the Declarer ask about the meaning of a King lead while holding the Ace? (...) A general inquiry is acceptable, whereas a specific question can be ruled deceptive, and therefore a violation of Law 73E. The Laws Commission unanimously approved the following question at all times: "Please explain your leads and carding."

If the question is misleading, the declarer could have known at the time of the question that the phrasing might lead the opponents to the wrong inference. Once again, it doesn't matter if the declarer knew or not; they "might have known." The Director has enough to consider a score adjustment, at least.

## 74 – Conduct and Etiquette

### **[A. Proper Attitude:**

1. *A player should maintain a courteous attitude at all times.*
2. *A player should carefully avoid any remark or extraneous action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game.*
3. *Every player should follow uniform and correct procedure in calling and playing.]*

### **[B. Etiquette: As a matter of courtesy, a player should refrain from:**

1. *Paying insufficient attention to the game.*
2. *Making gratuitous comments during the auction and play.*
3. *Detaching a card before it is his turn to play.*
4. *Prolonging play unnecessarily (as in playing on although he knows that all the tricks are surely his) for the purpose of disconcerting an opponent.*
5. *Summoning and addressing the Director in a manner discourteous to him or to other contestants.]*

Players should be aware of the impact that a call for the Director sometimes has on the other players and avoid causing any unnecessary bad feelings. It's part of a Director's job to be pedagogical about this. "Director, please," preceded by a small explanation to the table of why the Director needs to be called, will usually go a long way towards maintaining a cordial and enjoyable ambiance in a tournament. Calls like "DIRECTOR!!!" should be strongly discouraged.

***[C. Violations of Procedure: The following are examples of violations of procedure:***

- 1. Using different designations for the same call.*
- 2. Indicating approval or disapproval of a call or play.*
- 3. Indicating the expectation or intention of winning or losing a trick that has not been completed.*
- 4. Commenting or acting during the auction or play so as to call attention to a significant occurrence, or to the number of tricks still required for success.*
- 5. Looking intently at any other player during the auction and play, or at another player's hand as for the purpose of seeing his cards or of observing the place from which he draws a card (but it is appropriate to act on information acquired by unintentionally seeing an opponent's card).*
- 6. Showing an obvious lack of further interest in a deal (as by folding one's cards).*
- 7. Varying the normal tempo of bidding or play for the purpose of disconcerting an opponent.*
- 8. Leaving the table needlessly before the round is called.]*

Some of the violations of Courtesy and Etiquette should primarily be dealt with by trying to correct the behaviour. If the player insists and the gentler actions don't seem to have an effect, a procedural penalty and/or a Zero Tolerance penalty might do the trick. The important thing is for the Director not to escalate an incident needlessly. However, and depending on the infraction, more immediate and severe corrective actions might be in order.

**Example 1:** Dummy shakes their head in disapproval after the hand is over. There is no damage caused during the play, and the infraction does not rise to the standard of Zero Tolerance. A word by the Director might correct this.

**Example 2:** During the play, a defender says, “We already have four tricks, right? One more, and you’re down.” This is a severe violation of procedure. Independently of any damage stemming from possibly

awakening their partner, this player should be in line for a procedural penalty.

**Example 3:** A player is doubled and mumbles to the opponent, "You must be new in this club." This clearly deserves a Zero Tolerance, a stern talk, and a report to the Club Manager!

## **75 - Mistaken Explanation or Mistaken Call**

Law 75 is a very exacting Law in dealing with partnership understandings and should be used in conjunction with Law 40. The 2007 version of this Law incorporated examples formerly included only as footnotes to Law 75.

*[After a misleading explanation has been given to opponents the responsibilities of the players (and the Director) are as follows:*

***A. Mistake Causing Unauthorized Information:** Irrespective of whether or not an explanation is a correct statement of partnership agreement, a player, having heard his partner's explanation, knows that his own call has been misinterpreted. This knowledge is unauthorized information (see Law 16A), and the player must carefully avoid taking any advantage from it (see Law 73C); otherwise the Director shall award an adjusted score.]*

If their partner fails to Alert or Announce, a player may not make any indication during the auction. Showing surprise or discomfort may awaken their partner to the error and would be a violation of Law. In addition, a player may not make allowances for their partner's error. The auction must continue as if their partner had acted properly.

**Example:** RHO opens 1NT. The player doubles, intended as penalties, and correct according to the system. Their partner alerts and explains as a one-suiter. The player must carefully avoid the "surprised look" that will "tell" partner that the explanation does not match the hand held and also must not use the unauthorized information that their partner thinks that they hold a one-suited hand. When the auction continues with Pass

and 2♣ ("show your one suiter"), for the player 2♣ must mean whatever it would mean after 1NT Dbl (penalties) Pass 2♣. If confronted with logical alternatives, the player cannot choose the one(s) that could demonstrably be suggested by the knowledge of what their partner thinks that 2♣ means.

### ***[B. Mistaken Explanation***

1. *When the partnership agreement is different from the explanation given, the explanation is an infraction of Law. When this infraction results in damage to the non-offending side, the Director shall award an adjusted score.]*

The Director does not need to search for damage on behalf of the opponents of a partnership that gave a wrong explanation, but if they feel damaged, the Director will need to analyze what would have likely happened with the right information given. Note that this does not mean that the Director will consider that the player who gave the wrong information will also know the right information. The Director must consider that each of the partners who mis-explained or mis-bid will have their own understanding throughout the auction, and the opponents will have the correct agreements.

2. *[If a player becomes aware of his own mistake, he must summon the Director before the opening lead is faced (or during the play, if discovered later), and then provide a correction. The player is also permitted to call the Director before the auction ends, but he is under no obligation to do so (see Law 20F4).]*

75B2 contains a significant change when compared with the equivalent in the 2007 Laws. When a player realizes that they gave the wrong explanation, they can wait until the end of the auction to call the Director. They may do it sooner but are not required to. The reason for this change is that when the Director considers a score adjustment, they will have to judge what would happen if the opponents had the correct explanation of the system. The opponents are not entitled to know both the correct information and the fact that the

opponents are having a misunderstanding. Being able to call the Director after the auction is over avoids giving the opponents both sets of information while allowing for the Director to restore equity if required.

3. *[The player's partner must do nothing to correct the mistaken explanation while the auction continues, and if he subsequently becomes a defender, he must call the Director and correct the explanation only after play ends. If the player's partner is to be declarer or dummy, he must, after the final pass, call the Director and then provide a correction.]*

In a situation where a player knows that their partner gave the wrong information, they must call the director at the first legal opportunity: Before the opening lead is made, if declarer or dummy, but only after the end of the play if defending.

If the side that gave the misinformation in the bidding becomes the defending side, the partner of the player who gave the mistaken explanation **MUST** inform the Director and their opponents that, in their opinion, their partner gave a mistaken explanation. This is the one case in the Laws where the offending side must own up to its own infraction.

When it's the presumed declarer or dummy that calls the Director because of misinformation to the opponents, the Director may allow the last bidder on the non-offending side to withdraw their pass if they deem it probable that the pass was based on the misinformation (Law 21B). If the player withdraws this pass and substitutes another call, the bidding can then proceed from that point. If the last passer on the non-offending side does not change their call, the bidding as it occurred stands. The play now proceeds.

**Note:** When the Director arrives at the table because of misinformation, they should speak separately with each non-offender away from the table to ascertain what different action, if any, would have been taken with the correct information having been given at the appropriate time.

Regarding the example above under Law 75A, what should the player say to the opponents about the meaning of 2♣ that partner got wrong? As the partner's explanation is unauthorized information, the player should explain 2♣ as per their own understanding. This might seem to violate Law 75B3, but the player is not correcting their partner's explanation directly, and this explanation is in itself unauthorized information for partner anyway. This is also the exception to the general principle behind the revised Law 75B2, where the opponents will be able to play with apparently more knowledge than just the correct information about the player's system. The player may try to ask for the Director and explain the situation. The Director will ask their partner to step away from the table, and this mitigates the unauthorized information but does not suppress it.

*[C. Mistaken Call: When the partnership agreement has been explained correctly, the mistake being the call made and not the explanation, there is no infraction. The explanation must not be corrected (nor must the Director be notified) immediately, and there is no obligation to do so subsequently. Regardless of damage, the result stands (but see Law 21B1b).]*

***[D. Director's Determination:***

- 1. Players are expected to disclose their partnership agreements accurately (see Law 20F1); failure to do so constitutes Misinformation.*
- 2. It is a condition of any partnership agreement that both players possess the same mutual understanding, and it is an infraction to describe an agreement where the same mutual understanding does not exist. If the Director determines that the misleading explanation was not based upon a partnership agreement, he applies Law 21B.*
- 3. When there is an infraction (as per B1 or D2), and sufficient evidence exists as to the agreed meaning of the call, the Director awards an adjusted score based upon the likely outcome had the opponents received the correct explanation in a timely manner. If the Director determines that the call has no agreed meaning,*

*he awards an adjusted score based upon the likely outcome had the opponents been so informed.]*

One practical problem is how to determine if there is a mis-explanation (the partnership agreements are different from what was explained) or a mis-bid. The ACBL Laws Commission (New Orleans, 2015) issued the following statement: *[For purposes of adjudicating Mistaken Call vs. Mistaken Explanation, system notes are to be considered but not conclusive evidence of the actual partnership agreement.]*

This statement is important in itself and because it shows that the Director should make their own judgment about the issue, using information from a variety of sources (convention card, other players, own knowledge, etc.) and this should be the first task when called because a hand does not match an explanation given. A very simple example: The auction starts with Pass Pass 1♠ Pass. The dealer now bids 2NT and their partner alerts it as “Jacoby.” It should be clear for everybody that it’s the wrong information (the opening bidder didn’t notice dealer’s initial pass).

The Director might eventually conclude that the partnership had NO agreement, in which case the explanation that the opponents would be entitled to is simply “no agreement.”

*[Commentary from ACBL: The obvious, and simple, way to discover a partnership's agreements is to look at their convention card. However, when doing so, the Director should be careful to avoid some common traps:*

- 1. Always check to see that both cards are marked the same. If they are different, it tends to indicate that the pair never had an agreement.*
- 2. Make sure that whatever is written on the card applies to the auction at hand; this is especially important if there has been any interference by the opponents.*
- 3. Be very skeptical if a pair claims that they play a "variation" of a convention that they have not so indicated on their convention card.*



4. *Remember that if one player thinks their understanding is "X," and their partner believes it to be "Y," then they, in fact, have no agreement, and any explanation that doesn't accurately describe their partner's hand must be ruled as misinformation.*

*(...) Directors should "assume that a mistaken explanation was given, thus placing the burden of proof on the offenders."*

*This is, in general, a good policy in many ruling situations: protect the non-offenders unless the offenders can offer a clear and convincing defense for their actions.]*

*[ACBL Bulletin (December 1992; revised Summer 2018): Part of the problem for tournament directors (and players) stems from the fact that, on the surface, the two situations are identical. Assume that North makes a bid, and South tells East-West that it shows a certain hand. It later becomes evident that North's hand bears no resemblance to the one described by South. East-West summon the Director and claim damage. "I would never have done what I did if he had told me what he really had!" says East, and all agree with him. What happens then?*

*Before a ruling can be made, the Director must first determine whether North made a bid that was not in accordance with his partnership agreement (a mistaken bid), or whether South told the opponents of an agreement which did not exist (a mistaken explanation). The legalities of the two are totally different.*

***MISTAKEN BID:*** *It is NOT illegal to make the wrong bid because you have forgotten your partnership agreement. Usually, in such cases, you will reach a bad contract and get a terrible score. In other words, justice will be served. Sometimes, however, you will stumble into a lucky spot, or the opponents will err because they have been given the wrong idea about your hand. Regardless, the opponents are unlikely to be due redress for any apparent damage. Such situations are simply viewed as the "rub of the green." While East may be correct in saying he would have done better had he known what North actually had, we must remember that North's bid fooled South as well. South did all that is required by law: he told East-West what North's bid promised by*

agreement. Therefore, there is **NO ADJUSTMENT**. Of course, it is understood that North is not allowed to take advantage of his partner's proper explanation.

**MISTAKEN EXPLANATION:** In the above example, if North had bid correctly according to their agreements and it was South who was in error with his explanation, then East-West would be entitled to protection. While South can never be positive about what North actually holds, he can, and should, know what North is supposed to have. When the opponents ask you about a call for which you have a partnership understanding, you are required by law to describe your agreement accurately. When South fails to live up to this responsibility, the Director should give redress for any apparent or probable damage.

If South correctly informs East-West of his partnership agreement, it doesn't matter (legally) whether or not North's hand matches the description. Since there is no "penalty" for a mistaken bid, other than what the game itself will often extract, a pair may be tempted to always claim that the explanation was correct. For this reason, the Laws instruct the Director to assume that the explanation was wrong until the offending pair can produce credible evidence to the contrary.

The most common source of such evidence will be the convention card -- if what South claims to be the agreement isn't on the card, his side will probably lose the case.

If South has given a mistaken explanation, then North must inform the opponents at the proper time: After the auction is over if he is the declarer or the dummy; after the play is complete if he is a defender. If South wakes up later on in the auction and realizes that he has misinformed the opponents, he must summon the director before the opening lead is faced, or he may without obligation choose to call the director before the auction ends.]

## 76 - Spectators

### **[A. Control:**

1. *Spectators in the playing area are subject to the control of the Director under the regulations for the tournament.*
2. *Regulating Authorities and Tournament Organizers who grant facilities for electronic transmission of play as it occurs may establish by regulation the terms by which such transmissions are viewed and prescribe acceptable conduct for viewers. (A viewer must not communicate with a player in the course of a session in which the latter is playing.)*

### **B. At the Table:**

1. *A spectator may not look at the hand of more than one player unless allowed by regulation.*
2. *A spectator must not show any reaction to the bidding or play when a deal is in progress.*
3. *During a round, a spectator must refrain from mannerisms or remarks of any kind and must have no conversation with a player.*
4. *A spectator must not disturb a player.*
5. *A spectator at the table shall not draw attention to any aspect of the game.*

### **C. Participation**

1. *A spectator may speak as to fact or law within the playing area only when requested to do so by the Director.*
2. *Regulating Authorities and Tournament Organizers may specify how to deal with irregularities caused by spectators.*

### **D. Status**

*Any person in the playing area, other than a player or a tournament official, has the status of a spectator unless the Director specifies differently.]*

**The Director's Role:** The Director is completely within their right to impose necessary restrictions on spectators in order to guarantee

reasonable playing conditions for the contestants. Any kibitzer may be barred for cause by the Director.

**Example:** The Director may limit the number of spectators at a given table and eliminate standing spectators or spectators moving from one table to another. Only in extreme cases should the Director clear the room completely of kibitzers. Such an action would be warranted in a room already too crowded with players, for example.

**The Players' Role:** The players are expected to extend all reasonable privileges to spectators. A player may not bar all spectators from the table. They do have the right, however, to object to the presence of a specific spectator and may have *one* such spectator barred without assigning a cause.

**The Club Manager's Role:** Club officials are urged to extend all reasonable privileges to spectators and to understand that kibitzing is a part of the game.

**The Kibitzer's Role:** A kibitzer is there to watch, nothing else (unless the Director asks them to speak as to fact or law). However, once in a while, issues occur, and the Director will need to deal with them. The actions that the Director may take regarding a kibitzer might go from a short pedagogical reprimand to outright exclusion from the room, or even from all the playing areas. As to what to do regarding the players, when a kibitzer interferes with the play, it is a much more thorny matter.

**Example:** A kibitzer suddenly calls the attention of a player to the fact that they revoked, before the revoke is established. What to do?

The ACBL Laws Commission, in 2017, stated that *[a pair should not lose its rights because a kibitzer points out an irregularity before the pair does, since it is often difficult to say that the kibitzer "belongs" to a given pair. However, the kibitzer should be recorded in a player memo, and the kibitzer should be reprimanded and/or ejected from the event.]*

In practical terms, problems with kibitzers should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, striving for equity regarding the players.

## CHAPTER VIII - THE SCORE

### 77 - Duplicate Bridge Scoring Table

See Official Laws of Duplicate Bridge for a complete scoring table.

### 78 - Methods of Scoring

See Official Laws of Duplicate Bridge for a description of options. This Law contains the IMP scoring table.

### 79 - Tricks Won

#### *[A. Agreement on Tricks Won*

- 1. The number of tricks won shall be agreed upon before all four hands have been returned to the board.*
- 2. A player must not knowingly accept either the score for a trick that his side did not win or the concession of a trick that his opponents could not lose.*

#### *B. Disagreement on Tricks Won*

*If a disagreement arises, the Director must be called, then:*

- 1. The Director determines whether there has been a claim or concession and, if so, applies Law 69B or Law 71.*
- 2. If #1 above does not apply, the Director rules what score is to be recorded.*
- 3. If the Director is not called before the round ends, the score may be changed for both sides only when he is clearly convinced as to the result obtained at the table. Otherwise, he should either allow the recorded score to stand, or decrease the score for one side without increasing it for the other.]*

Law 79B3 above has an important practical consequence. When a player comes to the Director during an event, because of a disagreement in score (not for a claim or concession) and the Director is not convinced of the score actually achieved at the table, the Director has the option to keep the recorded score or give each side the worst of both possibilities.

**Example 1:** North-South play 4♠ and both sides agree that declarer took ten tricks. The board is scored as +420 for North-South. Later North-South believe they took 11 tricks, but East-West do not agree, and nobody can reconstitute the play convincingly. The Director can keep for both pairs the recorded score (420) or assign to each of them the worst of the alternatives: North-South get 420, East-West get -450.

**Example 2:** Now, both pairs agree that 11 tricks were actually made. For some reason, the Director is not 100% convinced that the actual result was +450. There's no difference in the final decision. As the Director is not convinced about the actual score, Law 79B3 still applies.

The same principles apply when a score is (allegedly) entered incorrectly on the traveling scoresheet or on the Bridgемate. It should be corrected whenever it is discovered before the end of the correction period (see Law 79C below) IF the correction has been verified by the opponents and IF the Director is convinced that it is the result that was obtained at the table.

Law 79C deals with the timing of requests for a score change:

### ***[C. Error in Score***

- 1. An error in recording or computing the agreed-upon score, whether made by a player or an official, may be corrected until the expiration of the period(s) specified by the Tournament Organizer. Unless the Tournament Organizer specifies a later time, this Correction Period expires 30 minutes after the official score has been made available for inspection.*
- 2. Subject to approval by the Tournament Organizer, 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.]*

*[WBF Laws Commentary, 2019: A scoring error is defined as a registered result which is not in accordance with the agreed-upon result. Examples are a score entered in the wrong direction, wrong vulnerability, wrong contract, or a mistaken correction of an adjusted score.]*

Note that this law allows a lot of discretion by the Tournament Organizer regarding a correction of a scoring error beyond the initial period of 30 minutes and should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Many local club games allow the correction period for one session (for example, Tuesday afternoon) to end at the start of the game the following week (Tuesday afternoon of the next week).

*[WBF Laws Commentary, 2019: Organizers should be encouraged to be liberal in getting the score recorded which accurately represents what took place at the table, particularly when the only reason it is not recorded that way was an error reporting the result. On the other hand, when qualifying phases or prize distribution are complete, it can be awkward to make late changes to scores.]*

Should a player be inattentive to either entering or checking scores, thereby causing a number of score corrections, the Director may consider issuing a procedural penalty and subsequent transgressions should receive increasingly larger ones.

# CHAPTER IX - TOURNAMENT SPONSORSHIP

## 80 - Regulation and Organization

The regulating authority for these Laws is the American Contract Bridge League.

The Tournament Organizer is the ACBL, the sponsoring district, the sponsoring unit, or the local sanctioned club.

*[80B2. The Tournament Organizer's powers and duties include:*

- a) Appointment of the Director. If there is no appointed Director the players should designate a person to perform his functions.*
- b) To make advance arrangements for the tournament, including playing quarters, equipment and all other logistical requirements.*
- c) To establish the date and time of each session.*
- d) To establish the conditions of entry.*
- e) To establish the conditions for bidding and play in accordance with these laws, together with any special conditions (as, for example, play with screens – provisions for rectification of actions not transmitted across the screen may be varied).*
- f) To announce regulations supplementary to, but not in conflict with, these Laws.*
- g) To arrange for the appointment of any assistants required for the Director.*
- h) To appoint other staff and prescribe their duties and responsibilities.*
- i) To arrange for entries to be accepted and listed.*
- j) To establish suitable conditions of play and announce them to the contestants.*
- k) To arrange for scores to be collected, results tabulated, and an official record made of them.*
- l) To make suitable arrangements for the conduct of appeals under Law 93.*



*m) Any other powers and duties conferred in these laws.]*

Regarding clubs, the Tournament Organizer may establish regulations for the conduct of duplicate games in its own club. These regulations may not contravene the *Laws of Duplicate Bridge* or ACBL regulations for sanctioned club games. A well-managed club will post supplementary regulations and ask any occasional players or guests to read them before they start to play.

# CHAPTER X - TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

## 81 - The Director

### *[A. Official Status*

*The Director is the official representative of the Tournament Organizer.*

### *B. Restrictions and Responsibilities*

- 1. The Director is responsible for the on-site technical management of the tournament. He has powers to remedy any omissions of the Tournament Organizer.]*

In the absence of the tournament organizer or a specific regulation, it is the duty of the Director to make the necessary decisions so that the event continues as smoothly as possible.

- 2. [2. The Director applies, and is bound by, these Laws and supplementary regulations announced under authority given in these Laws.]*

The Director is BOUND by these Laws and has no authority to contravene them.

**Example:** Defending against 7♦, a player makes a completely inconsequential revoke. Their partner later scores... the ♦ Ace! Because of the automatic trick transfer, the score on the hand will be 7♦ making. It might seem unfair to a less experienced Director, but there is no way around it.

### *[C. Director's Duties and Powers*

*The Director (not the players) has the responsibility for rectifying irregularities and redressing damage. The Director's duties and powers normally include also the following:*

- 1. To maintain discipline and to ensure the orderly progress of the game.*
- 2. To administer and interpret these Laws and to advise the players of their rights and responsibilities thereunder.*

3. *To rectify an error or irregularity of which he becomes aware in any manner, within the periods established in accordance with Laws 79C and 92B.]*

*[WBF Laws Commentary on 81C3 (2019): Suppose that a spectator informs the TD about a revoke for which he was not called, and the spectator believes that the offenders benefitted by their revoke. The TD should then find out what happened and use Law 64C to adjust the score if the offending side did indeed gain an advantage.*

*When he becomes aware of the blatant abuse of unauthorized information, he should adjust the score. Another well-known example is the discovery of a very unlikely score. It is the job of the TD to verify what happened.]*

4. *[To assess rectification when applicable and to exercise the powers given him in Laws 90 and 91.*
5. *To waive rectification for cause, in his discretion, upon the request of the non-offending side.]*

*[WBF Laws Commentary on 81C5 (2019): The option given in Law 81C5 should only rarely be exercised. Most TDs will never use it. A situation may arise between experienced and inexperienced players where education is more important than rectification.*

*Sometimes the infraction has more or less been induced by the opponents. An example: A player knocks twice on the table with his fingers at his turn to call; his LHO interprets this action as a pass and makes a call. If the TD is asked to resolve this via Law 81C5, he might be able to do so without the need for a more formal rectification.]*

6. *[To adjust disputes.*
7. *To refer any matter to an appropriate committee.*
8. *To report results for the official record if the Tournament Organizer requires it and to deal with any other matters delegated to him by the Tournament Organizer.*

## ***D. Delegation of Duties***

*The Director may delegate any of his duties to assistants, but he is not thereby relieved of responsibility for their correct performance.*

*He is the official representative of the tournament organizer.*

*He is responsible for the technical management of the game and is bound by these Laws and by supplementary regulations announced by the sponsoring organization.*

*While not relieved of these duties, the Director also has the power to appoint assistants as needed.]*

**Note:** The Director should never tolerate improper behavior in their game. They should not allow their authority to run the game to be challenged, or they will lose control of the game. Since they have absolute authority during the game, such challenges may be dealt with politely but very firmly. Laws 90 and 91 outline the Director's powers to penalize or suspend a player during the course of the game.

## **82 - Rectification of Errors of Procedure**

### ***[A. Director's Duty***

*It is the responsibility of the Director to rectify errors of procedure and to maintain the progress of the game in a manner that is not contrary to these Laws.*

### ***B. Rectification of Error***

*To rectify an error in procedure the Director may:*

- 1. Award an adjusted score as permitted by these Laws.*
- 2. Require, postpone, or cancel the play of a board.*
- 3. Exercise any other power given to him in these Laws.*

### ***C. Director's Error***

*If a ruling has been given that the Director subsequently determines to be incorrect, and if no rectification allows the board to be scored normally, he shall award an adjusted score, treating both sides as non-offending for that purpose.]*

Law 82C deals with a very important question: “What to do when the Director realizes that they gave the wrong ruling?”

The basic idea is that the Director should go back to the players, explain that the ruling was wrong, and adjust the score. For this purpose, they will have to assume that both pairs are non-offenders. However, this does not mean that they should lazily assign Ave+ to both pairs; neither does it mean that both sides get a good score!

**Example 1:** The table is playing in a part-score when they should be in game, and the Director makes a ruling error during the play of the hand. Treating both sides as non-offenders has no implications on the final contract (the bidding was already over when the Director was called). The Director's decision might involve a trick or two, but the contract remains a bad one for declarer!

**Example 2:** After an insufficient bid was replaced by a non-comparable call, the Director forgot to inform the players about lead penalties (the offending side ended up defending), and only realized that when play was already underway. They should let the play finish, go back to the players and explain what should have been the correct ruling. If the declaring side might have benefitted from imposing a lead penalty on the offender's partner first turn on lead, the Director should assume:

- For the declaring side, the favorable result of a lead penalty
- For the defending side, the result at the table (assuming that declarer might not have chosen a beneficial lead penalty)

This is one of the rare situations where a Director is entitled by these Laws to assign a “good-good” result to both sides, resulting in more than 100% of the matchpoints available. It's also a good example of

how the Laws try to steer the Directors away from “automatic” artificial adjusted scores.

### **Late Plays:**

It’s up to the Tournament Organizer and to the Director to have a clear policy on late plays.

When late plays are allowed, only one late play should be assigned to any one pair per session.

1. If a pair is unable, through fault of their own, to complete another board after the Director has assigned them a late play, the Director will award the offending pair an average minus and their opponents an average plus.
2. The Director should not allow a late play if any of the players at the table have already seen their cards on the deal. They should either allow the hand to be bid and played to its conclusion or cancel the board for both sides if playing it will unduly inconvenience the other contestants or unduly delay the progress of the game.
3. If the Director can determine that only one side was responsible for slow play, they award the offenders an average minus and their opponents an average plus for the un-played board. Both sides receive average if the Director is not able to determine blame.
4. If a pair has been assigned a late play and is unable to complete the last round and the late play in a reasonable time, the Director may award an artificial adjusted score. This is an average plus for pairs that were in no way at fault for the late play and an average minus for pairs that were responsible.
5. It is proper to bar late plays if the sponsor so desires or if time does not permit. The Director assigns artificial adjusted scores (Law 12) on any board that cannot be played in the time limit established for the round.

## 83 - Notification of the Right to Appeal

*[If the Director believes that a review of his decision on a point of fact] (damage after a hesitation; unauthorized information passed during the auction) [or exercise of his discretionary power] (as when they assign an adjusted score under Law 12) [could well be in order, he shall advise a contestant of his right to appeal or may refer the matter to an appropriate committee.] (See Appeals, Law 92.)*

Many times a player will not agree with the Director's decision and say the "A" word: "Appeal!" A good approach by the Director to these situations is to talk with the player when convenient (during a break, or after the end of the session) and explain the basis for the ruling, if necessary, quoting directly from the Law book. When the player understands that the ruling is what the Laws prescribe, very frequently they will end up agreeing with the Director's decision. They might still think that the ruling was unjust, but they will more readily accept it.

**Appeals at the Club Level:** The National Laws Commission has stated that a club may establish an appeals committee but is not obligated to do so. ACBL suggests that a club either have a standing appeals committee or appoint one when necessary. In this way, the Director is not the court of last resort.

## 84 - Rulings on Agreed Facts

This Law describes the mental process that should take place when the Director is called to a table, and all players agree as to what occurred.

Note: If the Law gives the Director a choice between some rectification or an adjusted score, they should attempt to restore equity by awarding a specific bridge result, resolving any doubtful point in favor of the non-offending side (and resorting to a weighted score if needed, as per Law 12C1c). The Director restores equity by analyzing the deal and determining what the normal result would have been on the board if the infraction had not occurred. They then award that result to both pairs.

Only in rare cases should the Director award an artificial adjusted score (Law 12C2a).

### ***[A. No Rectification***

*If no rectification is prescribed by law, and there is no occasion for him to exercise his discretionary powers, he directs the players to proceed with the auction or play.*

### ***B. Law Provides Rectification***

*If the case is clearly covered by a Law that prescribes the rectification for the irregularity, he determines that rectification and ensures that it is implemented.*

### ***C. Player's Option***

*If a Law gives a player a choice of rectification, the Director explains the options and sees that the choice is made and implemented.*

### ***D. Director's Option***

*The Director rules any doubtful point in favor of the non-offending side. He seeks to restore equity. If in his judgement, it is probable that a non-offending side has been damaged by an irregularity for which these laws provide no rectification, he adjusts the score (see Law 12).]*

When no rectification is prescribed by the Laws for the infraction, and unless there is some truly unusual occurrence, there is no need for the Director to exercise their discretionary powers. They should instruct the players to proceed with the auction or play.

**Example:** A player got up from the table for no apparent reason while dummy. The Director might, in extreme cases, assign a procedural penalty, but regarding the game itself, there is no rectification prescribed or needed.

Law 84D, about resolving doubtful points in favor of the non-offenders, should not be applied in a blind fashion. The goal is to resolve doubt wherever required but rule as equitably as possible within the spirit of the Laws.



## 85 - Rulings on Disputed Facts

*[When the Director is called upon to rule on a point of law or regulation in which the facts are not agreed upon, he proceeds as follows:*

### **A. Director's Assessment**

- 1. In determining the facts, the Director shall base his view on the balance of probabilities, which is to say in accordance with the weight of the evidence he is able to collect.*
- 2. If the Director is then satisfied that he has ascertained the facts, he rules as in Law 84.*

### **B. Facts Not Determined**

*If the Director is unable to determine the facts to his satisfaction, he makes a ruling that will permit play to continue.]*

Note the way that 85A is worded: "In determining the facts, the Director shall base his view on the balance of probabilities." When they go to a table on disputed facts, the Director must try and form their own view of what might have been the facts. They will not know for sure that what they think happened was indeed what happened, but they will judge how the balance of probabilities points to a particular version of what happened. If they are satisfied with this version of the facts, they should rule as if the facts were agreed upon.

**Example:** A player claims that they did not hesitate before opening 1NT. The opponents are positive that they did, and their partner "was not paying attention." Their hand is ♠A2 ♥AQJT8 ♦KQ3 ♣964. Might they have been thinking about opening 1♥ or 1NT and didn't realize that they broke tempo? It looks more likely that they were, indeed thinking. At a neighboring table, the same story, but now the player's hand is ♠A32 ♥KJ93 ♦KQ3 ♣K72. Do we see any reason for the player to be thinking about the hand? If the Director is 50/50 in their opinion, probably they will tilt towards a break in tempo on the first case, and away from it on the second one.

If the Director is unable to determine the facts to their satisfaction, they must make a ruling that will permit play to continue and notify the players of their right to appeal.

The Director will often have to use their judgment in certain cases where there is a dispute about what a player said.

**Example:** When three people at a table agree they heard an utterance different from what the player claims to have said, it seems prudent for the Director to decide that the threesome heard what they thought they heard. This includes the situation where dummy pulls the same card that both defenders thought they heard declarer call. If declarer claims they called for a different card, the Director is faced with a three to one situation: dummy by their action has agreed with the defenders.

In situations where one player claims not to have been paying attention, or when two partners say one thing and the other two another, the rule is not so clear. The Director should tend to accept that the player said what they claim to have said, and the opponents heard what they thought they heard.

**Note:** There are times when the facts themselves can help the Director to arrive at an equitable solution (once again, using the balance of probabilities).

**Example:** North opens 1NT (16 to 18), and South bids some number of NT. Declarer wins nine tricks. South now claims that they bid 3NT, but the opponents claim that they bid only 2NT. Without any additional supporting elements, if South holds 12 HCP, for example, this is strong evidence to support their claim. Conversely, a holding of 8 HCP and a balanced hand would put South's statement in doubt, and the Director may rule that the final bid was only 2NT.

## 86 - Team Play

**Average Score at IMPs:** At IMPs, when a Director chooses to award an artificial adjusted score of average plus or average minus, that score is

plus 3 IMPs or minus 3 IMPs, respectively. This Law does not allow the sponsor to vary this award at IMP scoring.

**Non-balancing Adjustments:** In Knockouts, when a Director assigns non-balancing adjusted scores, each side's IMP score on the board is calculated separately. The average of the two IMP scores is then assigned to both sides. In Swiss, when a Director assigns non-balancing adjusted scores, each side's result is based upon the comparison of its side's assigned or artificial score.

**Example:** A team may lose by 10 IMPs while its opponent wins by only 5 IMPs.

*[A. **Substitute Board:** The Director shall not exercise his Law 6 authority to order one board redealt when the final result of a match without that board could be known to a contestant. Instead, he awards an adjusted score.]*

If, for some reason, there is a canceled board, and the Director is considering having it redealt (Law 6D3), in a team game that is not an option if one or more players might know the result of the match without that board.

**Example:** Two teams finish their match (boards 1-8) and score it. Suddenly someone notices that board 5 had the cards rotated in the pockets (180 degrees). Because the teams have already compared and someone might have figured out the final score, re-dealing the board is not an option. The Director will have to move on to 86B next.

However, if there is more than one board that might be redealt, the Director can order it; this Law only applies to a situation when one board is on the line, not more.

## ***[B. Result Obtained at Other Table***

### ***1. Single Result Obtained***

In team play, when the Director awards an adjusted score and the result at the other table between the same contestants is clearly favorable to one side, the Director shall award an assigned

adjusted score (see Law 12C1c, but for multiple adjusted scores see B2 following).]

Law 86B1 applies when there is a score obtained at one table and there is no corresponding score from the other table. This can happen, for example, when the board is played with one hand having 14 cards and another 12, or a table is so late that they don't have time to start a board, or any other reason compatible with these Laws.

This Law does not apply in the example situation for 86A, where there are TWO results non-comparable, one at each table.

The Director will usually assign an artificial adjusted score (Ave+, Ave or Ave- depending upon each side's degree of culpability) on the board, but this Law opens another possibility: If the score obtained at the table is clearly favorable to one side (independently of who might be the offender) the Director should award an assigned adjusted score instead.

**[WBF Laws Commentary (2019):** In order to decide if the single (non-comparable) result obtained fulfils the criterion of being 'clearly favorable', the preferred approach is to estimate a weighted result based upon the range of probable outcomes for the board in question (Law 12C1c), compared with the existing result. If the expected gain (or loss) on the board is greater than 3 IMPs, then we consider the result 'clearly favorable' and apply Law 86B1. Otherwise, the TD should just apply Law 12C2 and award an artificial adjusted score (i.e., +/-3 IMPs).]

## 2. ***[Multiple Results Obtained at One or More Tables]***

Because ACBL has regulated some forms of team games through specific Conditions of Contest, Directors should check the commentary for Law 87 below before proceeding.

*[In team play when two or more non-comparable results have been obtained between the same contestants or when these Laws otherwise require the Director to award more than one adjusted score:*

- a) *If no contestant was at fault, the Director shall cancel the board(s) and award one or more artificial adjusted scores (see Law 12C2) or, if time permits, play one or more substitute boards (but see A above).*

- b) *If only one contestant was at fault, the Director shall award to the non-offending side, for each board in question, either an artificial adjusted score of average plus (see Law 12C2b) or an assigned adjusted score, whichever is more favorable. The offending side shall receive the complement of the score awarded to their opponents.*
- c) *If both contestants were at fault, the Director shall cancel the board(s) and award one or more artificial adjusted scores (see Law 12C2).]*

*[WBF Laws Commentary (2019): This Law applies whenever more than one non-comparable result is obtained between the same contestants. This includes any fouled or misduplicated board (see Laws footnote 27), as well as any other irregularity that requires the Director to award more than one adjusted score.]*

Contrary to 86B1 (single result), 86B2's application differs depending on who the culprit for the irregularity is that triggered this situation. When no side is at fault, the Director proceeds, for each board, as in 86B1. If only one side is at fault, the non-offending side has an Ave+ locked in. The Director will award Ave+ or an assigned adjusted score, whichever is best for the side

**Example 1:** NS in one room cause two boards to be canceled for that table, but the boards had already been played at the other table. Suppose that in one of them, the opponents played in an easy-to-bid, easy-to-make game. In normal circumstances, the board would be flat (0 IMPs). However, because there is one side at fault, the Director will assign the other side +3 IMPs on the board (the guilty side gets -3 IMPs, correspondingly).

**Example 2:** Same setup, but this time in the other room NS (the opponents) bid and made a brilliant slam, unlikely to be reached in normal circumstances. The Director should assign the likely outcome (in IMPs) of a slam making (probably against a game).

**Example 3:** Same setup, but this time in the other room EW (their side) played in 1♠XX+5 after a misunderstanding by the opponents. Unlucky. As the score in the other room is clearly favorable to the guilty side, the board is scored as Ave+ for the opponents.

3. *[The Regulating Authority may provide differently for circumstances where boards have been played at only one table between the same or multiple contestants. The score awarded for each such board may be varied by regulation from that prescribed in B2. However, in the absence of a relevant regulation, the Director proceeds as above.]*

86B3 only applies to situations of more when more than one board in involved (it refers explicitly to “boards”).

When dealing with fouled board (Law 87), ACBL has exercised the provision on Law 86B3 through specific Conditions of Contest (see below).

## **87 - Fouled Board**

*[A. Definition: A board is considered to be fouled if the Director determines that a card (or more than one) was displaced in the board, or if he determines that the dealer or vulnerability differed between copies of the same board, and the contestants who should have had a score comparison did not play the board in identical form for such reason.]*

Note that for a board to be considered fouled, one or more of the contestants that should have score comparisons on that board did not play it in identical form.

**Example 1:** Board 17 is mistakenly marked as "NS vulnerable." However, nobody notices it, and everybody plays the board like that. The board is NOT considered fouled.

**Example 2:** During the final stages of the Spingold, each table has its own set of boards. Board 3 is mis-duplicated at one of the tables. The board is considered fouled for that match only.

*[B. Pairs and Individual Scoring: In scoring a fouled board, the Director determines as closely as possible which scores were obtained on the board in its correct form and which in the changed form(s). He divides the scores on that basis into groups and rates each group separately as provided in the regulations for the tournament. (In the absence of a relevant regulation, the Director selects and announces his method.)]*

Using ACBLScore, the Director will need to go to "F11 / Fouled" and indicate which tables played the board in fouled condition. The program will calculate the corresponding matchpoint scores automatically. Using other software programs, the procedure differs, but the outcome is the same.

When using manual scoring, the calculations are elaborate and time-consuming. The Director can use the following (approximate) procedure:

1. They must determine at exactly what point in the game the fouling occurred. They do this by consulting the players, examining the scores, or both.
2. The Director divides the scores into two groups: one group before the foul and one group after.

The Director matchpoints each group by itself. A group of seven would be matchpointed on a 6 top, a group of three on a 2 top, etc. The Director then adds half a matchpoint to each score for each time the board was played by the other group.

*[C. Teams Scoring: See Law 86B2] (and 86B3)*

For teams scoring, the ACBL has regulated how to handle boards not played at both tables through specific Conditions of Contest for each type of event (below):

**Board-A-Match** (fouled board): The North-South teams' matchpoint score will be matchpointed within its own group as well as the East-West score, and the percentage matchpoint result of each pair is calculated. Let us add these two percentage numbers together and call it "X." If "X" is less than 80%, the team loses the board. If "X" is greater than 120%, the team wins the board. In all other cases, the board is declared a tie.

**Swiss:** Only those boards played at both tables count towards the result of the match. If the Director determines one side to be at fault for an unplayed board, they may apply Law 86.

**Knockout:**

- a) In the last segment of the match: The match is scored on the basis of the non-fouled boards played by both teams.
- b) In other than the last segment of the match: That segment is scored on the basis of the non-fouled boards played by both teams, and the next segment is increased by the number of fouled boards.

## **88 - Award of Indemnity Points**

This procedure was moved to Law 12C2.

## **89 - Rectification in Individual Events**

This procedure was moved to Law 12C3.

## **90 - Procedural Penalties**

*[A. Director's Authority*

*The Director, in addition to implementing the rectifications in these Laws, may also assess procedural penalties for any offence that unduly*



*delays or obstructs the game, inconveniences other contestants, violates correct procedure, or requires the award of an adjusted score.*

### ***B. Offences Subject to Procedural Penalty***

*The following are examples of offences subject to procedural penalty (but the offences are not limited to these):*

- 1. arrival of a contestant after the specified starting time.*
- 2. unduly slow play by a contestant.*
- 3. discussion of the bidding, play or result of a board, which may be overheard at another table.*
- 4. unauthorized comparison of scores with another contestant.*
- 5. touching or handling of cards belonging to another player (see Law 7).*
- 6. placing one or more cards in an incorrect pocket of the board.*
- 7. errors in procedure (such as failure to count cards in one's hand, playing the wrong board, etc.) that require an adjusted score for any contestant.*
- 8. failure to comply promptly with tournament regulations or with instructions of the Director.]*

The Director should use considerable restraint in the application or assessment of procedural penalties. When only their own inconvenience is involved, for example, it is usually the wrong time to penalize. When the fairness of the contest and the enjoyment of other contestants is involved, or when a more pedagogic and conversational approach has failed to stop an incorrect behavior, this Law should be applied. The bottom line is that “shooting penalties” left and right will normally have a detrimental effect in the quality and enjoyment of the game. Instead, a single penalty applied in the right moment can go a long way.

### **Penalties Under This Law**

A procedural penalty assessed by the Director under this Law may be overruled by a committee. The Director has true disciplinary powers under Law 81 (their general authority to run the game) and under Law

91 (their authority to maintain order and discipline to suspend a player). The penalties they assess under those Laws may NOT be overturned.

## **91 – Penalize or Suspend**

### ***[A. Director’s Powers***

*In performing his duty to maintain order and discipline, the Director is empowered to assess disciplinary penalties in points or to suspend a player or contestant for the current session or any part thereof. The Director’s decision under this clause is final (see Law 93B3).*

### ***B. Right to Disqualify***

*The Director is empowered to disqualify a player or contestant for cause, subject to approval by the Tournament Organizer.]*

This law empowers the Director to assess disciplinary penalties in points or to suspend a contestant for the current session or any part thereof. The Director’s decision under this clause is final and cannot be changed by an appeals committee.

**Note:** Removing a player for the balance of the game is an extreme measure. In addition to the effect on the contestant, severe problems of a technical nature may result from this action. The Director should not, however, shirk their responsibility when it is clear that a contestant should be expelled, as in cases of intoxication.

To maintain control, the appearance of disciplinary measures will often produce a better end result than expulsion.

**Example:** The Director could remove rather than expel a player from the game for attacking their authority. When the Director temporarily removes the offender, visible to surrounding contestants, with a subsequent return to competition, the appearance and total effect is better for the other players and the offender.

Depending on the type of game, when a Director does use their disciplinary powers, they should report the matter to the club appeals committee, club management, Unit President, District President, and/or ACBL Recorder for consideration of further action.

# CHAPTER XI – APPEALS

## 92 - Right to Appeal

In several instances under Laws 92 and 93 the expression “appeal committee” is used. Depending on the event in question and the specific regulations, an authorized alternative may replace the appeal committee. At the NABCs, for example, some appeals are heard by a Panel of tournament directors (who may use expert players as consultants).

### ***A. Contestant’s Right***

*A contestant or his captain may appeal for a review of any ruling made at his table by the Director. Any such request, if deemed to lack merit, may be the subject of a sanction imposed by regulation.*

### ***B. Time of Appeal***

*The right to request or appeal a Director’s ruling expires 30 minutes after the official score has been made available for inspection unless the Tournament Organizer has specified a different time period.*

### ***C. How to Appeal***

*All requests for a review of a ruling shall be made through the Director.*

### ***D. Concurrence of Appellants***

*An appeal shall not be heard unless:*

- 1. in a pairs event both members of the partnership concur in making the appeal (but in an individual contest an appellant does not require his partner’s concurrence).*
- 2. in a team event the team captain concurs in making the appeal.]*

Any ruling can be appealed (theoretically). However, frivolous appeals may be subject to specific penalties. In ACBL tournaments, contestants may be initially given an AWMW (Appeal Without Merit Warning),

and the entity hearing the appeal may also vary the score against the appealing side or assign a score penalty.

If a member of the partnership or the captain of the team does not wish to pursue an appeal, the appeal will not be heard.

The Director has the opportunity to discourage frivolous protests, but they are not intended to act as a buffer between appellant and committee, passing along only those appeals they consider meritorious.

They may, under unusual circumstances, offer informal, friendly advice to an appellant not to waste their own time and that of the committee's, but they are otherwise supposed to refer all protests routinely to committee.

## **93 - Procedures of Appeal**

### ***[A. No Appeals Committee***

*The Director in charge shall hear and rule upon all appeals if there is no Appeals Committee [or if no alternative arrangement has been made under Law 80B2(k)], or if such cannot operate without disturbing the orderly progress of the tournament.*

### ***B. Appeals Committee Available***

*If a committee (or authorized alternative) is available:*

- 1. The Director in charge shall hear and rule upon such part of the appeal as deals solely with the Law or regulations. His ruling may be appealed to the committee.*
- 2. The Director in charge shall refer all other appeals for adjudication.*
- 3. In adjudicating appeals, the committee (or the authorized alternative) may exercise all powers assigned by these Laws to the Director, except that it may not overrule the Director in charge on a point of law or regulations, or on exercise of his Law 91 disciplinary powers. (It may recommend to the Director in charge that he change such a ruling.)*

### ***C. Further Possibilities of Appeal***

1. *Regulating Authorities may establish procedures for further appeals after the foregoing procedures have been exhausted. Any such further appeal, if deemed to lack merit, may be the subject of a sanction imposed by regulation.*
2. *The Director in charge or the reviewing body may refer a matter for later consideration by the Regulating Authority. The Regulating Authority has authority to resolve any matter finally.*
3. (a) *Notwithstanding 1 and 2 above, where deeming it crucial to the progress of the tournament, the Regulating Authority may assign to a specified tournament body the responsibility for dealing finally with any appeal and, along with the parties to the appeal, is then bound by the outcome.*  
(b) *With due notice given to the contestants, a Regulating Authority may authorize the omission or modification of such stages as it wishes of the appeals process set out in these Laws. ]*

**A very important note:** An appeal committee (or authorized alternative) may NOT overrule the Director in charge on a point of law or regulations, or on exercise of their Law 91 disciplinary powers.

### **Club Appeals Committee**

A club is not obliged to establish an appeals committee.

When a club has elected to allow an appeals committee, an appeal on a matter strictly of Law or regulation is heard in the first instance by the Director. An appellant then has the right to carry their case to committee, but the committee can do no more than attempt to convince the Director that they were in error. The Director should, on the other hand, be aware that if the Appeals Committee is insisting that they change a ruling, the ruling might have been wrong and the Director should confirm for themselves that this is not the case.

*[ACBL Laws Commission: A further appeal to the Regulating Authority (ACBL) may be allowed only as follows:*

- a) *On a point of law to and at the discretion of the ACBL Laws Commission.*
- b) *On an allegation of bias of a committee member or members to and at the discretion of the ACBL Appeals and Charges Committee. The appellant is required to present evidence that the bias was not known at the time of the hearing.*
- c) *The appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days of the decision of the Bridge Appeals Committee that heard the issue.]*

When there is more than Law at issue, the Director must refer all other appeals to the committee for adjudication. In matters of bridge judgment or of disputed fact (e.g., did a player revoke? Did that revoke cost the opponents more than the penalty gave them?), the committee is the final judge.

### **Committee Members**

A committee is generally recruited out of the game in which the problem occurs. It should consist of either three or five members so that a majority decision may be reached more easily. The committee should not include any member of the club directorial or management staff. No member of the committee should be personally involved with any of the individuals concerned.

A club is not required to honor requests for committees.

### **Suggested Procedure for a Club-Level Committee:**

1. Survey the game and see if there are enough people for a satisfactory committee. Playing experience, bridge judgment, and the ability to analyze all aspects of a question are what is needed. The committee members chosen should have the respect of all concerned.
2. Decide whether or not to hold a committee. If not, talk to the people involved and explain the decision. If yes, ask the prospective committee members if they would be willing to help out with a problem and serve on a committee after the game. Some will say yes, some no. If a committee can be formed,

notify both pairs (teams) involved so that they can attend the meeting and present their side. All parties involved, including the committee members, should be reminded of the meeting during the last round.

3. As soon as the committee members are finished with play, call the committee to the meeting area. This may mean that the Director will have to let the scores sit until they are finished with the committee. So be it! The Director should appoint one of the members as committee chair. If the chair is inexperienced, give them a copy of this article to read so that they will know the procedures involved.
4. Meet with the committee with both sides present. The meeting should proceed in the following manner:
  - a) As a preliminary, the Director should introduce everyone present and specify which pair is appealing.
  - b) The chair should now take over the hearing. They should first assure all concerned that everyone will get a chance to speak - that it would be appreciated if no one interrupted the narratives (including committee members!). The chair should ascertain that there are no objections to any of the committee members by asking each side individually. If any of the parties object to any committee member, the reason for the objection should be heard and the committee should decide whether or not to excuse the member objected to
  - c) The Director should speak first in the following manner: "I was called to the table by (N S E or W) to consider a situation involving (short description). The following facts were related to me: (fact description). The following (Laws, regulations, procedures, common practices) pertain in this situation: (enumerate). I ruled (the ruling)."
  - d) The chair and then the committee members should ask any questions they may have of the Director.
  - e) The chair should inquire of the appealing parties if they have anything to add to the Director's statements. They should also ascertain why they think the ruling should be changed.
  - f) The other side should now be heard. If they have nothing to add, the chair may ask for any other statements from



kibitzers, additional testimony from the Director, from the appealing parties, etc.

- g) When there is no more testimony to be heard and the chair and committee members have completed their questioning, the chair should excuse all parties from the deliberations (including the Director, unless there has been request to remain). The Director should be available to assist and advise the committee (on points of Law and/or regulation only, not judgment) during its deliberations, but should not participate unless requested. The committee should now deliberate and reach a decision concerning the situation. The decision should be commensurate with the instructions from Chapter IX of the ACBL Handbook (Powers and Duties of an Appeals Committee follows this section).
5. When a decision has been reached, all parties, including the Director, should again appear before the committee to hear the result. If the Director cannot be present, they should make sure the chair has agreed to transmit the result to the Director so that any score change can be made.
6. After the decision has been rendered, allow no more discussion about the situation!! The time for discussion and dispute was in the prior period. The committee members should not be subjected to any form of harangue or abuse by dissatisfied players. If this begins, the committee chair or the Director should immediately stop the conversations and warn the players that this is a serious breach of conduct which is simply not allowed. Express to them that it could lead to disciplinary penalties (matchpoints or victory points taken from their score in the current game) or barring from future games.
7. Make any scoring adjustments deemed necessary by the committee, etc.

The Director does not need to explain why they ruled the way they did unless the committee asks it directly. Also, the committee should pose these questions after the players have left, and not in front of them, to curtail further discussions. The players are in the committee to confirm the facts, explain their reasons why they appeal, or why they think the

appeal is not warranted (depending on their side), and to answer any questions that the committee may have. They're not supposed to argue with the committee and/or the Director regarding the reasoning behind the ruling.

## **POWERS AND DUTIES OF AN APPEALS COMMITTEE**

*(This is an excerpt from the ACBL Handbook of Rules and Regulations - Chapter IX)*

### **[ Powers and Duties**

*The convened appeals committee is considered to have been delegated all judiciary powers and duties of the Tournament Committee, save for any that may have been specifically withheld by ACBL regulations. It must adjudicate every case that is brought before it but may dismiss an appeal as being frivolous and assess a penalty against the player(s) filing such a charge or appeal. The Chief Director must inform the committee that its rights and powers include, but are not limited to, the following:*

*Uphold the Director's ruling.*

*Cancel the Director's ruling and make any adjustment the committee believes will constitute an equitable solution.*

### **The adjustment may be:**

*Assignment of an Adjusted Total Point Score: The committee may attempt to estimate what final contract would have been played had the infraction in question not occurred and to calculate the probable result that would have been achieved. It may then order the board scored as though that result was actually attained at the table.*

*Award of an Adjusted Score: The committee may adjust the matchpoint score received by either side or both sides.*

*Cancel Results: The committee may cancel the result on the board in question and award an average, average plus or average minus score to either or both sides.*

***Note:** While the scores need not balance, except for rare instances, such as the Director having made an error in Law, the total matchpoints should not exceed top on a board.*

***Award Overall Percentages Scores:** The committee may award one or both sides their overall percentage score in the session on the board in question (in effect not permitting the board to affect the disputants' scores one way or another).*

***Assess Matchpoint Penalties:** The committee may assess a matchpoint penalty against the offenders without granting any compensation to the non-offending side.]*

*[ACBL's Handbook for Bridge Appeals Committees: A committee's main task is to decide the facts, apply its collective judgment to the effect the facts have on the matter before it, apply the law as stated by the Tournament Director, to the facts, and make its decision. Its members should work together to reach a consensus. No member should stubbornly hold to a position without seriously considering the contrary positions held by other members or change his or her position solely to avoid dissension.*

*A committee should not compromise on the facts. Only one set of facts can exist. Determining the effect of the facts is necessarily a subjective judgment.*

*Compromise on the effect of those facts, therefore, is often appropriate and always possible.*

*Committee members should avoid endless and futile deliberations. A vote resolves an issue, but a committee may revisit that issue if a member raises some new point. However, once the committee announces its decision, the matter is at an end.]*