

How to Make a Good Ruling

Whenever you approach a table to make a ruling, you are representing your club and displaying your own professional abilities and knowledge. It is important that this be done well. Carry a Law Book or Duplicate Decisions with you when you go to make a ruling.

Be aware of your game at all times.

Making a ruling starts before you reach the table. Be aware of the noise level and emotional content of the game. Many times you can hear a situation developing and be on your way to the area even before you are called. If you are on top of these situations, it will keep your game quieter, less tense and progressing easily. Everyone will have a better time. Do not let yourself get so involved talking with players or friends that you must be called two or three times before a table of players can get your attention. If you allow this to happen, the players will be irritated with you before you even reach them. The sooner you get to the table, the less time there will be for an explosive situation to develop.

Locate the director call and let the players know you are on the way.

Whenever you hear a call, pinpoint the area and let the players know you are on the way by a wave of the hand, a nod or a call of "Coming" or "Thank You". This will forestall multiple follow-up calls and consequent irritation and noise. If you cannot pinpoint the call, ask the room at large "Who called?" When they raise their hand, acknowledge the call. Then proceed to the table.

Approach the table as smoothly as you can.

Don't run, but get there as quickly as possible without disturbing the rest of the room. This may necessitate taking detours or going the "long way round." Do it! Pushing in back of other players or otherwise disturbing their game will annoy them unnecessarily.

Approach the table in a friendly manner with a cheerful expression.

When you arrive at the table, ask the question, "How can I help?" Remember, the players are already somewhat disconcerted by an irregularity and are probably on the defensive. Anything you can do to ease the situation will be to everyone's advantage. You will be able to think and comprehend more quickly, and the players will be able to explain and listen more carefully if the tension is lessened.

Define the problem — bidding, play, conduct.

Attempt to define the general area of the problem (bidding, play, conduct) without etching it in stone. Remember to be as open as possible to information that the players are trying to give you.

Remain in control of the situation at all times.

When the players see that you are ready to listen, they will probably all start talking at once. It is imperative that only one person speak at a time. Sometimes you will need to require a moment of silence so "we can collect ourselves." Choose one player to speak, and indicate this to the others. Say something like "One at a time, please. I will listen to everyone, in turn, but only one at a time. Will you (indicate one player, preferably the one who called you) please tell me about the situation? What is the problem we are considering?" If you can get one agreed

statement from the players in answer to this question, or even one key word, you will be able to listen much more knowledgeably and shorten your ruling time considerably.

Verify with the players your understanding of the problem.

Listen to the facts as related by each person, one at a time. At the completion of their statements, verify with the players at the table that this is indeed what happened by repeating it to them sequentially and logically. Do not try to make a ruling until you are able to do this. If you are not careful, you may well find yourself quoting Laws and penalties that really don't apply.

Quote the Law (preferably by reading it) and see that it is properly applied.

After you are able to verify the facts, complete with agreement or disagreement on the facts by all concerned, quote the Law applying to the situation, state the options available and penalties that apply and stand by to see that these are selected and paid.

Inform the players when it is a judgment situation and explain procedure.

If it is a judgment situation, the director should never make a ruling or adjustment immediately. In cases of this sort, state, "I will consider the problem more fully. Score it up 'AS IS' for now. I will let all of you know my decision later. Meanwhile, please proceed." After consideration, you must return and inform both parties of your decision.

Leave the vicinity as soon as you can.

After you make your ruling, don't stick around to get into further discussion. If you have a judgment situation, analyze the deal, check the other results on the board and if possible, get an opinion from appropriate players (players of the same caliber who are not playing or who have played the hand already) or other directors before making a decision.

Inform the players of their right to appeal a judgment ruling.

A ruling on a judgment situation can be appealed. The players should be so informed. If your club does not provide appeals committees, directors should (at their convenience) hear the appeal by discussing the situation with the appellants and their opponents, if necessary, at greater length.

Be able to make book rulings rapidly.

To be able to make timely rulings, you have to know where in the Laws the various situations are covered. In your spare time at home, leaf through your Law Book or copy of Duplicate Decisions, stopping at various Laws and their places in the book — front, middle, back. Be sure you have read and are familiar with Laws 72–76 (Proprieties), Laws 81–91 (Tournament director) and Laws 92 and 93 (Appeals). Indexing your Law Book or your copy of Duplicate Decisions is one of the most valuable exercises a new director can perform.

To appear professional, you must have a firm grasp of the material available in your field.

Directors should be aware of pertinent articles published in the Bridge Bulletin. They must know at least as much as, and preferably more than, the players. This can only be done through extra study. Keeping current is expected of anyone who wishes to run a successful game.