

A Directors Guide to avoiding Slow Play

The accepted rate of play for duplicate bridge is 8 boards per hour or 7¹/₂ minutes per board. We need to stick to this rate to complete our 24-board evening by around 10:30 and clear up by 11:00. By adopting the following simple guidelines, 7¹/₂ minutes per board should be ample time to enjoy our bridge and have sufficient thinking time:

1. **When arriving at a table at the start of the round, greet your opponents politely, check you have the correct opponents and tell them what system you are playing especially if it is unusual.** This only requires a phrase such as “Benji weak” or “5-card majors and strong no trump”, further explanations can be given when questions are asked in the auction. Similarly, if you wish to inquire after your opponents’ bunnions or their new car, please leave it until the boards are finished.
2. **Remove your cards from the board, count them and sort your hand.** Do not fill in your score card with the opponents number, this can be done when the first board is scored – **the golden rule for filling in your scorecard is that you should never do paperwork while the table is waiting for you to do something else.**
3. **Once the auction is complete, if you are on lead, select your lead and place it face down on the table before managing the Bridgmate or filling in your scorecard with the contract** – you can do your paperwork while dummy is being arranged and declarer is planning his play.
4. **Once play of the hand is complete, count and shuffle your cards and replace them back in the board, then fill in your scorecard.** North should also complete the traveller and show it to the rest of the table for East to check. Do not delay the next hand with examination of any hand or discussion of what might have been. If there is time, this can be done once the round is completed but is better left to the end of the evening.
5. **Only discuss the hands once you have played all the boards in the round.**
6. **If sharing boards, it can be helpful for dummy to pass on a board just played** or to ensure that the next board required is immediately available.
7. **Finally, if you wish to collect refreshments or visit the toilets, do so when you are dummy or sitting out.** Rushing to do these things between rounds often catches people out as the director may call the end of the round just as you leave the room.

By following these simple guidelines you should find you have far more time for the important business – the bidding and playing of the cards. As director, I regularly see tables sit down at the same time yet one table is playing trick 6 of the first board before the other table has pulled the cards from the board! 7¹/₂ minutes per board is not quick but if we waste 5 of these minutes chatting, doing paperwork and making coffee, then it becomes impossible even for the quickest players!