**Ethics and Etiquette @ the Bridge table**

# Courtesy

* Be courteous always at the bridge to partner, the opponents and the Director
* Greet your new opponents at the table
* The Director should always be called to the table by using the word “please”
* Once the bidding has commenced general conversation must stop
* Keep noise levels down by keeping discussion during play to a minimum

# Table manners

* Cards should not be taken out of the board before all players are at the table
* The board should be left on the table during the bidding so that everyone can see the vulnerability
* At the end of play, do not mix up your cards until the result is agreed with the opponents
* During play you are not allowed, without permission, to touch or handle your opponents’ cards
* When you have to make the opening lead, play your card before writing down your contract or entering details in a scoring device.
* Do not ask for information unless it is your turn to call or play
* Dummy or either defender may draw attention to a card pointed incorrectly; the right expires when a lead is made to the following trick
* The North/South pair is responsible for the boards and for ensuring that boards are not fouled before they are sent to the next table

# On Play

* The opening lead should be made face down to allow partner to ask questions about the auction.
* Do not detach a card from your hand before it is your turn to play.
* Declarer should not call for a card in dummy until LHO has played.
* Any player has the right to inspect a played trick until a card is played to the next trick, but only if that player has not closed their card.
* Do not fidget with multiple cards before selecting a card to play. Think, then play a card
* A played card cannot be retracted once it has touched the table.
* Do not rearrange your hand if you run out of a suit – alert players will notice that.

# Dummy’s role

* Dummy may not ask for a review of the auction
* The trump suit should be laid out on dummy‘s right. Cards in each suit should be laid out in sequence from high to low, with low cards nearest the declarer
* Dummy should not play a card (even a singleton) without the declarer’s say-so
* Dummy is not entitled to call the director when there has been an infraction of the law or other problem during play. Indeed dummy may not draw declarer‘s attention to anything except that she is about to lead from the wrong hand or ask if she is out of a suit played to the current trick

# Tempo

* Develop the habit of bidding and playing smoothly and in uniform tempo. Each card should be played at a uniform speed (3-10 seconds). The exception is trick 1, where everyone is allowed to plan
* When making a bid, always think through your options fully and then pick the appropriate bidding card from the box. Picking up one card or fidgeting, then picking up another card conveys information to your partner and is a definite no-no
* Avoid mannerisms, meaningful eye contact, sighs, grimaces and using extra words such as ―”I guess I need to pass” “cold contract” etc
* Avoid hesitations by being consistent and deliberate in your bidding. A hesitation followed by a pass places an extra burden on partner to justify continuing with the bidding as this may have communicated information inadvertently
* If you have a difficult decision you have a right to think but partner cannot take advantage of the knowledge that you had a problem. So if your partner takes time to bid / bids out of tempo and then passes, you should pass too unless you have a clear reason to bid based on your hand and not on partner’s hesitation
* Avoid snapping the card or playing with undue emphasis as it may reveal special interest to either partner or opponent

# Alert procedure

* Alerts are meant to inform the opponents that the meaning of a bid is not what would customarily be assumed, i.e. it’s not “natural” or “standard”. The Alert gives the opponents (each at their own turn to bid) an opportunity to inquire as to the correct meaning of the bid
* The Alert system is for the benefit of the opponents, not to help you and your partner recognize when one of you has forgotten your system . It’s not ethical to take inference from incorrect alerts
* Reminding your partner to alert your bid is not allowed

# Explanations

* If an opponent alerts a call and you’d like further information about the bid, wait until it’s your turn to bid and then ask the person who alerted to explain the call
* It’s always a good idea to ask the alerter to explain the meaning privately so that the other 2 players at the table aren’t privy to the information provided. The alerter should also go out of their way to explain the call privately to the person who asked for the explanation
* It’s not a good idea to ask leading questions like: “Is that weak?”. That could be construed to imply that you have strength in the suit and convey unauthorized information to partner
* In general, it’s better to not ask for an explanation while the bidding is in progress, unless you are considering a bid. Such queries may alert partner or opponents to information about your holding and come under the heading of “questionable behaviour”
* Usually, it makes no sense to ask for the meaning of a non-alerted call because all of these calls come under the umbrella of bridge logic
* Don’t ask questions in the pass-out seat unless you are planning a bid, otherwise you may be unknowingly alerting your partner on what to lead or convey information about the hand
* Full disclosure – Your opponents are entitled to know your bidding and card-play agreements (during the bidding or play). However, you only need to tell them what your system is, not speculate on partner’s holdings by looking at your own.
* An announcement is simply an Alert that may be accomplished in a word or short phrase. Five frequently heard announcements are: “May be short”, The range of a natural 1NT opening bid, e.g. “15 to 17”, “Transfer”, “Forcing” and “Semi-forcing”
* As with a full-fledged Alert, it’s the partner, not the bidder, who makes the Announcement

# Post-Mortems

* Wait until the game is over for post-mortems. Not only could a post-mortem undermine partnership confidence, but it may communicate information to players who have not played the hand
* Never try to teach or criticise a player at the table unless guidance is requested
* It is recommended that other than system clarifications or questions about partner’s specific holdings in a hand, there be no discussion of any kind during a session. After a match is over, have a discussion with partner on the things that went wrong during the match and how you might fix them next time.

# Unauthorized information

* This is a critical area that’s not understood or appreciated even by some very experienced players. The idea is that you should go out of your way not to communicate information to your partner with your mannerisms, tempo, tone of voice etc
* Example: Say partner opens 1NT and RHO bids 2S. You have 7 hcp but no convenient bid. The one thing you should NOT do is to take more than your usual quota of time (5-10 seconds) before you bid or pass. Whatever you do, do it in your normal tempo. What’s even more critical than not conveying information like this is to not take inferences from pauses/hesitation/glares etc. You SHOULD absolutely only bid based on your understanding of partner’s bids and your own cards and not based on partner’s tempo or behaviour at the table. In the above example, if you are the 1NT opener and

partner thinks for 20 seconds after 2S and passes, it’s downright unethical to bid again because your partner’s hesitation conveyed information that she had some values and wanted to compete.

# Some notes on the Law

* Any infraction that occurs doesn’t automatically attract a Penalty. According to the Law, “it needs to be rectified by the director without providing undue hardship to either side”. Therefore, it’s incorrect to perceive every small mistake in procedure as a serious error. Instead these should be viewed as infractions that may require rectification. Call the director whenever there’s an infraction
* A Revoke is a play of an illegal card. Most of the time, it occurs when a player doesn’t follow suit when he could have. When a revoke occurs and is established, call the director to enforce the laws. Note that there is no automatic transfer of tricks upon a revoke. Director will attempt to establish equity and ensure that the non-offending side is not damaged in any way
* Passing of unauthorized information (UI) – is a serious problem, but it happens very frequently (wittingly or unwittingly). Director is allowed to evaluate the extent of damage based on circumstances and provide rectification as appropriate. However, the misuse of UI will be viewed very seriously by the Director and may result in warnings and/or stringent penalties
* Misinformation (like failure to alert / wrong explanation of system) may result in rectification. But the score adjustments are subject to damage caused to the non-offending side
* Note that there is no penalty for forgetting one’s system, assuming that it can be established what your system was in the first place (usually based on a convention card)