

LAWS OF DUPLICATE BRIDGE - 2017

To keep-up with the evolution of the game, the WBF undertake a review of the Laws every ten years or so. The previous 2007 release encompassed many changes, and whilst the latest edition – the 2017 Laws – has fewer changes, it is probably the most comprehensive yet, and the trend towards giving the Director more discretion has continued. The basic purpose of the Laws is still in defining correct procedure when things go wrong, and in general not to punish offenders, but to provide an equitable result acceptable to all competitors. These latest Laws give more emphasis to clarifying the interpretation in certain areas.

The WBU have decided that the new Laws will come into effect from August 1st 2017, but in the meantime club Directors should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the changes and gain experience at club level (before adopting at the club ensure that your committee advises the members). This is a learning process for all, so as well as rectification, Directors should also focus on educating players. New booklets are now available (free to WBU affiliated clubs, otherwise £5 including p&p - contact Neville Richards), but a .pdf version is available at:

<http://www.worldbridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017LawsOfDuplicateBridge-paginated.pdf>

The more important changes are:

Comparable Call - in previous Laws there was considerable reference to ‘...a bid having the same meaning...,(insufficient bid), or ‘...applying to denomination specified, rather than the denomination named...’. This approach has been clarified with the introduction of ‘A Comparable Call’ Law 23, which clearly defines what alternative type of call would be acceptable in the relevant circumstances.

LAW 23 – COMPARABLE CALL

A call that replaces a withdrawn call is a comparable call, if it:

- 1. has the same or similar meaning as that attributable to the withdrawn call, or*
- 2. a subset of the possible meanings attributable to the withdrawn call, or*
- 3. has the same purpose (e.g. an asking bid or a relay) as that attributable to the withdrawn call.*

This new Law is frequently referred to, in particular from Laws relating to an insufficient bid or call out-of-turn. This change clarifies previous interpretations, and adds the concept of ‘same purpose’. So for example in a sequence 2NT – 2♣ (insufficient), previously there was confusion as to whether 3♣ (assuming a basic Stayman approach) was allowed. With the new concept of ‘same purpose’ (asking for 4/5 card major) this is now allowed.

The important old Law 23 – ‘**Awareness Of Potential Damage**’ has not been abandoned, it has merely been relocated to Law 72C (this is better positioning, since it now clarifies that the Law refers to actions both in the auction and the play). This Law is frequently referred to elsewhere.

Bid Out Of Rotation (Law 31):

The changes to this Law have been made to try to ensure a more natural result is obtained.

A major change is when it is partner’s or RHO’s turn to call. The previous Law penalised offender’s partner (by an enforced pass), whereas now: -

If RHO’s turn, if that player bids, the offender can make the any comparable call, and there are no constraints on partner. Even if offender doesn’t make a comparable call, partner is only silenced for one round – previously he was silenced always.

If partner’s turn, partner can bid whatever he likes (but mustn’t use UI from the out-of-turn call). The offender can then make any comparable call).

Similar changes have been made to Law 30 - the ‘**Pass out of Rotation**, and Law 32 – ‘**Double out of rotation**’). The three Laws have been extensively re-worded.

Example: West – 1♣ – South (out of turn) – 1♠. North could now be allowed to make a take-out double, and South could be allowed to bid spades at his next turn (previously North would have been silenced by South's infringement).

Looking At Another Player's Cards (Law 7). Previously a player couldn't ask to see another player's card (unless the Director gave permission). The game has now been made more friendly – you are allowed to see another person's cards with the player's permission.

Forfeiture Of Right To Rectification (Law 11). If a player gives a ruling when an opponent has infringed (without calling the Director), and that side gains should the offenders not be fully informed as to the correct procedure, any gain to the non-offenders can be removed. The offenders receive the score as played, rather than an adjusted score.

Example : A defender leads out-of-turn. Declarer tells the defenders it is a major penalty card. Later, when offender's partner is on lead, the TD is belatedly called to enforce the lead restrictions. The offending pair may not be aware that they could have legally worked to alleviate the penalty. Any gain to the non-offenders can be removed.

Score Adjustments (Law 12). When weighting scores, it has now been formalised that any cancelled score (due to UI) should not be included in any weightings (previously referred to as the 'Reveley Ruling').

Score Adjustment (Law 12C1e) – Serious Error or Gambling Action. This sub-Law has been included to clarify when the non-offending side doesn't necessarily receive full redress (serious error, or unsuccessful gambling action).

Incorrect Number Of Cards (Law 13A2). If no call has been made, any change of cards doesn't convey unauthorised information. However the Director can adjust the score if the knowledge of a card has influenced the result (lowers standards than UI as imposed by Law 16C).

Play Of Wrong Board (Law 15). The new Law clearly differentiates between an incorrect board for the round, and cards from a different board in the same round. The rectification is better explained. This distinction was not directly apparent in the old Law. Also there are more situations when the Director can allow play to continue normally.

Unauthorised Information (Law 16) – whilst the content of the Law has essentially remained unchanged, it has been better worded to emphasise the more important aspects.

Misinformation (Law 21). This change is more relevant to players rather than Directors. If a player realises that he has given an incorrect explanation, he is no longer under an obligation to call the Director immediately. However, he must call the Director before the end of the Clarification period (i.e. before the opening lead is faced). (This is a poor change – it will create more problems than it solves).

Exposed Card (Law 24) – with the change to 'auction' rather than 'auction period' this makes a significant difference should a player expose or drop a card before the bidding has started. The Director now has to rely on the 'unauthorised information' Law should this frequent situation occur.

Change Of Call (Law 25). The new Law gives better guidance to the Director in determining whether a call is considered to be intended or un-intended. It also the Director more discretion and latitude on determining the intention (or otherwise) of making a call. The old 'pause for thought' has been removed.

Lead Restrictions Following a Withdrawn Call (Law 26). By referencing the new Comparable Call Law, this Law has been simplified (and better worded) – declarer can simply prohibit the lead of a suit not mentioned in the legal auction, irrespective of whether or not it was mentioned in the withdrawn call. The WBF originally included an option to allow declarer to ask for the lead of a particular suit (not mentioned in the legal auction). Despite previous 'protests' highlighting the shortcomings of its inclusion, *this clause was not removed until after many countries had published their Laws' booklets, so this should be redacted.*

Inadmissible Double (Law 36). The Law is extended to cover the situation should an inadmissible double be discovered after the lead is faced; the contract is scored ignoring the inadmissible double.

Partnership Understandings (Law 40) - the **Meaning of a Call** cannot be varied dependent upon which player of the partnership makes the call ('style' can be altered but not method). Previously this was only a matter of Regulation (blue book) rather than Law.

If the opposition request, a player may now **consult his own system card** when explaining partner's call or play.

Dummy's Rights (Law 43) - if dummy has 'lost its rights' and is the first to warn defender of an irregularity, if the defenders gain, that gain can be removed.

Play of A Card (Law 45). When declarer attempts to change an unintended call of a card from dummy, the previous 'without pause for thought' has been removed. If it was clearly unintended, declarer can change until he next plays a card from either his own hand or dummy. Also the previous right of defender or declarer (from his own hand) to possibly change an unintended card (rare) has been removed.

Penalty Card (Law 50). Changes have been made as to whether information derived from a penalty card is authorised or unauthorised (to the offender's partner). When a penalty card is on the table information is authorised (but the Director may still adjust if unfair advantage has been gained), but when returned to hand it is unauthorised. Also when a penalty card has been played, the original circumstances are unauthorised.

Example – South is in a spade contract. He leads a boss heart from hand, West and North follow, but East trumps with (singleton) ♠K. East now discovers a heart, and has to play it (non-established revoke). The ♠K is a major penalty card. South now leads ♠Q, and West knowing his partner has ♠K, can be allowed to play small (from Ax). At the end of the hand declarer may argue that West should consider playing ♠A (dropping partner's bare king), in order to then exit with a small spade, avoiding a possible end-play. The Director may then award an adjusted score on the basis that West has been assisted in his play of the suit.

Multiple Penalty Cards (Law 51). The situation has now been clarified when offender's partner does not ask for, or prohibit a particular lead, – the cards all remain as penalty cards.

Lead Out Of Turn Accepted (Law 53) – Should it ever happen, a LOOT on the thirteenth cannot be accepted.

Defender's Lead Out-Of-Turn (Law 56). Previously this Law rather misleadingly just referred to another Law (the opening lead out of turn). The new Law clarifies what declarer can do in this situation - accept or reject (penalty card).

Premature Lead or Play (Law 57). An extra option has been added – declarer can now also **request** that the offender's partner leads an alternative specified suit.

Also if a defender attempts to play a card when it is RHO's turn to play, that card must be played if legal, otherwise it becomes a major penalty card. The current Laws (45) only consider the case when this card is exposed. This change addresses the situation when the card isn't exposed (not directly covered in the old Laws), and the player may be trying to disconcert declarer.

Revokes (Laws 62, 63, 64). a) Minor change when both sides revoke on the same trick; if only one side has played to the next trick, both revokes must be corrected.

b) There is a better definition of the moment of the establishment of a revoke in a 'claim or concession' situation. The old Law 63A3 was somewhat vague, but the new Law does give clarification (by referring to Law 69A)

c) If a player revokes again (in the same suit), the Director may adjust the score if the non-offending side would likely to have made more tricks without the further revokes. Much better worded with the inclusion of a 'Redress Of Damage' clause (64C)

d) If both sides revoke on the same board and one side is damaged, the Director can adjust the score as if no revokes had occurred.

Incorrectly Pointed Trick (Law 65) and **Inspection Of Tricks** (Law 66). More generous to players – players can draw attention or inspect, but only as long as **his side** has not played to the next trick (previously when the next trick was started by any side).

Defective Trick (Law 67). This Law now includes the unlikely situation in which a card is played to a trick, but is subsequently restored to hand. If that same card is then played to another trick, the Director awards an adjusted score.

Claims Law (Law 68) – a major change, which allows the non-claimers/non-conceders to request that play continues, and if all agree, play does continue, but the original claim is now voided and the score stands.

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