

## Bridge Slang

The game of bridge is not unlike other games or hobbies wherein participants and/or spectators, over time, develop their own terminology or slang. Outsiders who suddenly find themselves around a group of bridge addicts will have a real awakening. I know that after playing duplicate bridge for over 40 years I still occasionally hear some expression that I hadn't heard before.

There are lots of animals and birds that found their way into bridge slang for some reason. To "duck" is to refuse to take a trick for whatever reason but a "quack" is a hand with lots of QUEENS and JACKS and therefore probably not as good as the point count may tend to indicate. On the other hand an "ugly duckling" is a hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution while a "swan" is a hand with 7-4-1-1 distribution.

A "moose" is a hand with lots of high cards in all the suits, but a "dog" is just the opposite....thus few points. However, "walking the dog" has nothing to do with a "dog" of a hand. Instead it refers to bidding timidly with a good hand in the hopes of eventually getting doubled.

Then there's the "striped-tail ape double" whereby you double the opponents in a contract below slam in the hopes of getting a better score than the slam would have been. Better hope that they don't redouble though.

A "beaver" is a redouble and just like in the animal world there are various kinds of beavers in the bridge world. A "hog" is someone who bids a lot trying to become the declarer, but a "pig's eye" is the Ace of diamonds. A "turkey" and a "fish" are both bad bridge players, but to "fish" means to play in some manner trying to get certain cards out. Other seafood terms include "salmon" to refer to a seven spot card and "crab" to refer to a three spot card. A "cat" is another term for the dummy and a "rattlesnake" is a 4-4-4-1 problem hand. A "hippopotamus" is everyone's favorite contract....5NT.

The Canadians seems to have some rather unique slang. KQ is referred to as "KQ frozen" and similarly AK is "AK frozen". (Americans would say that these holdings are "tight"). An auction is over when it goes "all change" making me think of trying to find a new partner for an upcoming square dance. And from Western Canada comes.....a hand with three Kings is a "nativity scene" while a hand with an honor in every suit has a "cow in every pasture". But my favorite is "a gang splinter" for a hand with two singletons.

The Chinese have several descriptive expressions including going for “chopsticks and two bowls” (you figure it out) and “Chinese finesse” which is the lead of an unsupported honor in the hope that the next player will not cover. (Although the origin of this ploy is actually unknown the concept is familiar to experts around the bridge world.)

Specific cards have slang names of their own. The nine of diamonds is the “curse of Scotland” while the seven of diamonds is the “beer card”.... which has to do with who buys the beer if the last trick is won by it. Similarly the two of spades is the curse of Mexico while the four of clubs is the “devil’s bed post”. All the face cards can be called “Rembrandts”.

There are even a couple of slang terms that sound like they might have something to do with sex.....like “elopement” “fast arrival” “frigid” and “went to bed with” (an Ace). “Elopement” is the process of using small trumps to ruff and/or possibly cross ruffing a hand. “Fast arrival” is a tactic whereby getting to game quickly denies any extra values. “Frigid” means the same as “icy” and expresses the opinion that this hand can’t go set with any reasonable line of play. “Went to bed” (with an Ace) means you ducked that Ace once too often and it went bye-bye. And in spite of what you might think to the contrary “stiff” means that that a player has only one card in some suit.

Researching this I found a couple of slang terms that I had never heard of before....but I’ll be sure to use them when the opportunity arises. “Amber” refers to both sides being vulnerable and “apricot” has been given to a weak two-suited red hand. Somebody is hung up on red it seems.

Finally there are the old standbys. “Cheese” refers to a hand with a lot of holes in it. Instead of the two-baggers or three-baggers they have in baseball, bridge has its “six-baggers or seven-baggers” denoting the length of the suit. And of course, there’s one that everyone who has played duplicate bridge more than once uses.....you have been “fixed” when an opponent makes a bid or play that isn’t very good on the surface but works out miraculously well for them thus giving you a very bad score.

The last two you are unlikely to need to use. “Going for a telephone number” refers to suffering a big penalty like 1100 or 1400. But you won’t need that expression because you have a partner who does “ambulance service” and rescues you from impending disasters!