

Top Ten Worst Habits at the Bridge Table (ala David Letterman)

These could probably be called my ten greatest pet peeves at the bridge table, but David Letterman has a whole lot more style. Hence, the format.

It's a somewhat negative article as indicated by the title. If you already in a bad mood I suggest you come back to this later.

And the Top Ten Worst Habits at the Bridge Table are: (drum roll)

10. Card snapping.
9. Spending too much time looking at the traveler.
8. Discussing results.
7. Eating while playing cards.
6. Agonizing over a bad board
5. Taking advantage of partner's hesitations.
4. Pulling cards from dummy before they are called.
3. Fiddling with the Bidding Box.
2. Criticizing partner

And the Number 1 Worst Habit at the Bridge Table.....Pulling cards from your hand before it's your turn to play.

And now to elucidate.

10. Card snapping. I'm not exactly sure the reason that some bridge players have developed the habit of snapping their cards.....each and every card that they play. It could be just to show that they can do it; so call me jealous because I can't. It could also be to keep themselves awake. Unfortunately it keeps me awake also.

9. Spending so much time looking at the traveler. If at all possible I vote for pickup slips! At our club we use travelers and they must be perused after each and every board. I maintain that if these players would spend even that little amount of time thinking about the hand they just played and how they could have done better, they ALL would be better players.

8. Discussing results. Now this wouldn't be so bad if we were in a room all by ourselves but unfortunately there are several more tables in the room and all too often they can hear pertinent bits of information without even trying to do so. Some of us have voices that seem to carry forever which doesn't help this situation at all. So it's best to table the discussion until later. (Hopefully we'll be able to remember the hands later!)

7. Eating while playing. All too often there are snacks around during games and it's pretty obvious that when people eat while playing the cards get dirty. It's not real pleasant to take your cards out of the board and then have to clean up the crumbs that came with them. Sometimes the cards even get stuff smeared on them. Yuck!

6. Agonizing over a bad board. If you have a bad board, get over it and move on. Prolonging the agony doesn't helpbelieve me I know. Continuing to lament doesn't change the result but it does slow down the game!

5. Taking advantage of partner's hesitation. This is a hard one. Hesitations themselves are certainly NOT a violation of the bridge laws nor are they unethical behavior at the table? Sometimes there's a lot to think about.....that's part of the game. However, it is in violation of the bridge laws to give your partner unauthorized information and for your partner to then act on that information...that is often what happens when an undue hesitation occurs. The director is there to rule when bridge laws have been broken so be sure to say "Director please".

4. Pulling cards from dummy before they are called. Only dummies do this!!! Don't be guilty of suggesting a line of play for declarer by reaching for one of dummy's cards before declarer tells you what to play. Take a nap and wake up whenever you're told to do something.

3. Fiddling with the Bidding Box. According to an appendix to the Laws a bid is made when the bid card is removed from the box with intent. Thus when a player runs his/her hand over the bid cards and starts, but does not actually remove one, he is not considered to have made any "call". However, unauthorized information

(UI) may have been transmitted to partner. There are no specific penalties, but the director will adjust the score if he determines that partner's actions might have been influenced by the UI. The bottom line: *decide on your call before you reach for and touch a bidding card!!*

2. Criticizing partner and/or opponents. In bridge as in other competitive endeavors it is extremely important to learn how to win and to learn how to lose. While it is acceptable in tennis or football to do "high fives" when completing a successful maneuver, it is not proper behavior at bridge. On the other hand it is in extremely poor taste to berate partner when he or she plays less than perfectly. Likewise, it is not proper to chastise the opponents when a poor play turns out to be lucky or a good play provides you with a bad board. It's not in your best interest and it's certainly not in your partner's best interest to offer this type of criticism at the bridge table. Bridge is a difficult game under the best of conditions and making someone uncomfortable isn't going to help your results.

1. Pulling cards out of your hand before it's your turn to play. This is not only somewhat unethical but it usually doesn't help your bridge game. What is declarer supposed to do when he/she is debating whether or not to take a finesse and LHO already has pulled a card out and has it ready to play!!! Keep those cards in your hand and don't reach for a card until it's time to place a card on the table. Also defenders should be extremely careful about rearranging their cards during the play of the hand.

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