

The New Laws of Bridge 2017

Summary of Major Changes

(Fearghal O'Boyle with acknowledgements to Murray Wiggins NZ)

To keep this article short, I am just highlighted the major changes to the 2017 laws. The new laws come into effect in Ireland on the 1st September 2017. Please refer to the Law Book for full details. The laws are available for purchase from the CBAI shop and are also available online at <http://www.worldbridge.org/rules-regulations/2017-laws-of-duplicate-bridge/>

Law 7 – Control of Board and Cards

This law has always been here. It has been amended subtly and now requires the board to remain in the centre of the table *correctly orientated*. Players are encouraged to follow this law so as to reduce the risk of cards being returned to incorrect pockets but we also ask for commonsense too - if there is no room for the board - then there is no room for the board!

Law 9 – Procedure Following an Irregularity

Dummy may now attempt to prevent an irregularity by any player, but is still unable to draw attention to an irregularity once it has occurred until play has concluded, except for correction of a mistaken explanation by Declarer. However Dummy is not allowed to enquire about a revoke by a Defender.

Law 12 – Director's Discretionary Powers

TDs will find that this law has been re-written in a logical way. The intent in the Laws is, as often as possible, to award *assigned* adjusted scores and not *artificial* ones i.e. to attempt to obtain a bridge result at the table where at all possible.

Law 15 – Wrong Board or Hand

If players commence an auction on a board that they are not supposed to play at that turn, and that none of them have played, then the auction proceeds and they are awarded the result they achieve on the board.

Law 20 – Review and Explanation of Calls

If a player gives an incomplete or incorrect explanation of their partner's bid, they must call the Director prior to the opening lead to correct their explanation, although they can call the TD sooner. Players are not permitted to enquire about a call if the sole purpose is to elicit an incorrect response from the opponents.

Law 23 – Comparable Call

This is the biggest change in the new Laws. If a player makes an Insufficient Bid, Pass out of Rotation, Bid out of Rotation or Double or Redouble out of Rotation and that call isn't accepted by the next player in turn, then if they can replace that call with a Comparable Call there is no further rectification. It is important that TDs develop a clear understanding of what constitutes a Comparable Call. Many players will struggle with interpretations of these definitions and Directors need to be prepared to be able to correctly advise them.

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

1. has the same or similar meaning as that attributed to the withdrawn call, or
2. defines a subset of the possible meanings attributable to the withdrawn call, or
3. has the same purpose as that attributable to the withdrawn call

Example of a call with a same or similar meaning as that attributed to the withdrawn call.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	
W	N	E	S
1♥	P	2NT ¹	
¹ 4+ card support, 12+ HCP			

1♥ by East was bid at West's turn to open and wasn't accepted by South.

The TD was called and West opened 1♥ and after a pass by North, East bid 2NT - showing a hand with at least 4 Hearts and at least 12 points. This 2NT bid is an example of a similar call as the call out of rotation.

Example of a call that is a subset of the possible meanings of the withdrawn call.

W	N	E	S
		P	
W	N	E	S
1♠	P	2♠	

East passed at West's turn to open and this was not accepted by South. The TD was called and West opened 1♠ and after a pass by North, East bid 2♠. The 2♠ bid is a subset of all the hands make up the set of 'pass' hands. It is less than an opening strength and promises Spade support. 1NT, 3♠ and even 4♠ may also be acceptable comparable bids depending on the partnership methods.

Example of a call that has the same purpose as that attributable to the withdrawn call.

N	W	E	S
4♥	P	4♣	
N	W	E	S
4♥	P	4NT	

East bid an insufficient 'Gerber' 4♣ asking for Aces. The TD was called. As long as 4NT over 4♥ has the same purpose - asking for Aces - then it is a comparable call.

Law 26 - Call Withdrawn, Lead Restriction

Lead penalties are referred to in the Insufficient Bid, Pass out of Rotation, Bid out of Rotation and Double or Redouble out of Rotation Laws. If the withdrawn call is replaced by a comparable call there are no lead restrictions. If the withdrawn call is replaced by any other call then there may be lead restriction. On offender's partner's first turn to lead, declarer can forbid the lead of any one suit not bid by the offender in the *legal* auction.

Law 30, 31 & 32 - Pass out of Rotation, Bid out of Rotation, Double or Redouble out of Rotation

The Law considers the situation were the infraction occurs at RHO's turn to call and when the infraction occurs at LHO's or partner's turn to call. The call out of rotation can always be accepted by LHO (unless it is an inadmissible double or redouble).

RHOs turn to call

If the infraction occurs at RHO's turn to call and RHO passes, then the pass, bid, double or redouble must be repeated, unless the double or redouble is inadmissible.

A player who passes at RHO's turn to call must pass for one round regardless of what action RHO takes. Law 72C (awareness of potential damage) needs to be considered.

When a player bids, doubles or redoubles and it is not accepted, then if the RHO bids, doubles or redoubles, the player must make a legal call.

If the withdrawn call can be replaced by a comparable call, then there is no further rectification, but an assigned adjusted score can be awarded if the non-offenders are damaged.

If the withdrawn call is replaced by any other call then the offender's partner must pass when next it is their turn to call. There may be unauthorized information (UI), lead penalty and awareness of potential damage considerations.

LHO or Partner's turn to call

If a pass, bid, double or redouble is made at LHO or Partner's turn to call, and if it is not accepted, then the partner can make any legal call at their turn to call (they must ignore any unauthorized information (UI) they may have received).

The offender, at their turn to call, can make any legal call. If the offender's call is a comparable call then the auction continues, there is no rectification, but an assigned adjusted score can be awarded if the non-offenders are damaged.

If the withdrawn call is replaced by any other call then the offender's partner must pass when next it is their turn to call. There may be unauthorized information (UI), lead penalty and awareness of potential damage considerations.

Law 50 – Disposition of a Penalty Card

Information pertaining to a penalty card is authorized to offender's partner while the penalty card remains on the table but becomes unauthorized once it is replaced in offender's hand. Once the card has been played, the reason it occurred remains unauthorized to Offender's Partner. Information about the Penalty Card is authorized to Declarer at all times. If the Director judges that the declaring side is damaged by the information gained from the penalty card then he shall award an *assigned* adjusted score

Law 66 – Inspection of Tricks

Players can now look at, but not expose, the card they played to their last trick, until either player from their side has played to the next trick.

Law 68 - Claim or Concession of Tricks

A hand can now be played out following a claim but only if a member of the non-claiming or non-conceding side requests the hand to be played out and all four players concur (if dummy is not at the table then they are deemed to have concurred). The claim or concession is void and lead penalties and unauthorized information restrictions do not apply. The result achieved at the table shall stand.

If there is an objection by any player (including dummy), then the Director must be called and will apply Law 70 to adjudicate equitably for both sides. The hand cannot be played out once the Director has been summoned.

Law 75 – Mistaken Explanation or Mistaken Call

It is now an infraction to state there is a partnership agreement when there isn't one, for example, by stating an opinion as if it were an agreement, or by saying "I'm taking that as...".