

From the Editor

I hope that you find the articles helpful as you continue on your journey in bridge.

**I want to take this opportunity to wish each of you and your families a very Happy Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!**

**Make your plans now to attend the Lone Star Regional in Houston from January 24 thru January 30.**

I'm interested in your feedback, so please send your comments to [paulcuneo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:paulcuneo@sbcglobal.net).

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## Better Bridge Habits

### **Bid and Play in Tempo 2**

Developing good habits at the table is an important part of learning bridge. Learning to bid and play in tempo is a challenge for all players and it takes time.

Playing in tempo is important for defenders, as changes in tempo may communicate information to declarer about your holdings. Here are some tips to help with the process of playing in tempo:

Memorize the auction as it proceeds, and repeat the auction in your mind prior to your last pass.

Once the opening lead has been faced, everyone should study the hand. While declarer is making their plan, the defenders should also be thinking and counting. As you make your plan for the defense, try to anticipate what declarer will do and your response. For example, if declarer is your left hand opponent and the dummy has Qxx of trump and you have K10xx, decide whether you will cover the Q if declarer leads it.

When you are short in a suit, plan what you want to communicate to partner by your discard when declarer plays the suit.

If declarer is running a long suit, plan ahead for the position you want to hold once the long suit is exhausted as well as the information you want partner to have.

Remember, it is unethical to vary tempo in an effort to communicate to partner or to trick declarer. Try to take the same amount of time to play each card.

## Eddie Kantar's Bridge Tips

### **When discarding, keep four-card length parity with dummy.**

Say dummy has a four-card suit (AKQ8), and you have the (9432). Your highest card is higher than dummy's lowest card, the signal to hang on to that suit for dear life.

[.www.kantarbridge.com](http://www.kantarbridge.com)

## Improved Declarer Play

### **Card Combinations**

As declarer, many times the ability to make our contract depends on playing one of the suits in a way that maximizes our chance to take tricks. The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge by ACBL has a section on playing card combinations. Here is a combination from the Encyclopedia that seems to occur frequently:

A K 10 9

x x x x

We can maximize our chances of 3 tricks by leading a small card towards the 10. If that wins or our left hand opponent rises with the Queen or Jack, we have our 3 tricks. If it loses to the Queen or Jack, then cash the A. The probability of taking 3 tricks is 90%.

## Demon Defense

Auction:

N    E    S    W  
                  1S    P  
2S    P    4S    all pass

You hold:

S – A65  
H - 92  
D – Q743  
C – J1043

What do you lead? In his book on Modern Bridge Defense, Eddie Kantar writes, “Bridge players love to lead singletons or doubletons. The best time to lead a short suit is when you have a trump suit that looks like Ax, Axx, or Kxx. With these holdings, you may be able to find an entry in partner’s hand and get your ruff. Lead your top heart. You are hoping to be able to trump a heart with a low spade. If your trump holding is QJx or J10xx, lead JC as you would be trumping with your natural trump trick.” [www.kantarbridge.com](http://www.kantarbridge.com)

## Bidding Tips

You hold:

S – 10732

H – Q1083

D – K2

C – A72

Your partner opens 1S. What is your bid?

In his CD on Conventions, Mike Lawrence writes, “Bid 3S. A direct limit raise of opener’s major suit requires 4 or more trump and 10 – 12 support points. (HCP plus distribution) There is no hand that is entitled to an immediate jump raise with only 3 card support. When you jump raise, your partner will think you have 4 trumps and use this in forming his opinion of what the hand is worth. If you produce only 3 trumps, the combined hands will play less well than your partner expected.” [www.michaelslawrence.com](http://www.michaelslawrence.com)

## Its the Law

Law 40 governs partnership understandings. Duplicate Decisions which is published by ACBL goes into detailed explanation of the requirements and can be viewed here: [http://www.bridgehands.com/Laws/ACBL/Duplicate/DD/The\\_Auction.HTM#40](http://www.bridgehands.com/Laws/ACBL/Duplicate/DD/The_Auction.HTM#40)

The principles of the law are clear. People playing together each must have a filled out convention card disclosing their agreements and the cards must be identical. Our opponents are entitled to know our agreements concerning system, conventions, leads and signaling. Communication between partners during a hand is limited to the bids, and the cards played; not body language, positioning of cards, hesitations etc.

ACBL and individual sponsors may limit which conventions are acceptable for use in the games and tournaments under their jurisdiction. Some new players are surprised to find out they are not free to “invent and use” conventions, but must follow the charts as prescribed by ACBL.

[http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/CONVENTIONCHARTS9\\_19.pdf](http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/CONVENTIONCHARTS9_19.pdf)

The charts were updated in the fall of 2018 and you'll find that the "Open" chart is the most commonly used.

ACBL offers guidance on how to fill out the convention card: <https://www.acbl.org/document-library/#players>

One area that can be confusing to new players is use of the word “standard.” For leads and defensive carding, it is important to reach agreement with partner on your methods. Standard leads are in bold on the convention card. If your agreement deviates from these, your leads are not “standard”. Likewise “standard” count and attitude signals are defined. Standard attitude is “high cards are encouraging; low are discouraging”. When giving count, standard signals are up the line for holding an odd number of cards and a high/low echo for an even number.

Take the time to talk over these agreements with your partner. Knowing what partner is doing will help improve your defense and produce better results.