

Dealing with Difficult Players

One of the biggest problems that can come up at any bridge club is how to deal with a difficult player. Maintaining a friendly and pleasant playing atmosphere is essential to the success of a club. No-one wants to play at a club where you are met with a gruff and unfriendly welcome when you arrive at a new table. All it takes is just one player being unpleasant to a newcomer to put that potential new member off ever setting foot in the club again. If you want a thriving club you need to make sure that all your members are aware of this.

Law 74 of The Laws of Duplicate Bridge covers both Conduct and Etiquette at the bridge table. This includes the following:

- 74.1. A player should maintain a courteous attitude at all times.
- 74.2. A player should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game.

Thus a player should call the Director if another player is interfering with the enjoyment of the game by his or her bad behaviour. The Director should then quietly and diplomatically but firmly address the issue and give a warning if appropriate. It may sometimes be necessary for the Club Chairman, or another senior club figure with tact and authority, to have a quiet word in private with someone who breaches etiquette on more than one occasion.

Of course, a newcomer will not be aware of this. So anyone who observes such behaviour towards an inexperienced player should be encouraged to call the Director even if not personally involved.

Some of the most successful clubs are those which have implemented the EBU's policy of Best Behaviour @ Bridge to the letter. This is sometimes also known as a Zero Tolerance policy. That is to say there is zero tolerance of bad behaviour and anyone who behaves badly on a regular basis is banned from the club. A 'three strikes and you are out' rule is sometimes applied.

A 'Smiley Face Card' can be a helpful adjunct to the bidding box. This is simply a yellow card with a typical 'Smiley' face on it which is waved under a player's nose if he or she is a bit thoughtless or not quite in accordance with bridge etiquette, but not to the point of requiring the TD to be called to the table.

As remarked elsewhere in this Handbook, it is essential that a club has a robust [Constitution including Disciplinary Procedures](#) to cover any eventualities including unacceptable behaviour.

If there is a member with a personal hygiene problem, this can also be off-putting for other players. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to deal with this other than by a sympathetic fellow member having a gentle word with the afflicted person without being patronising. Using an Internet search engine with a suitably worded query will bring up several websites with suggestions on the best way to approach the matter.

All of the above is easier said than done, of course, but sometimes it is necessary to deal with these thorny issues decisively for the greater wellbeing of all.

See also the section on [Dealing with Slow Play](#).