

# **ACBL CODE OF ACTIVE ETHICS**

The actively ethical bridge player does everything he can within the scope of the game to defeat his opponent at the bridge table while making that experience an otherwise enjoyable one for them.

**A** primary objective of the ACBL is to  
**C**ontinue the concerted effort begun at  
**T**he Fall, 1986 Atlanta NABC to try to  
**I**nstill in all players the concept that  
**V**igorous efforts should be made to insure  
**E**quity and enjoyment are benchmarks of Bridge.  
**E**very player should strive to make sure  
**T**hat opponents have in no way been  
**H**armed through incomplete or misleading  
**I**nformation as to the meanings of his pair's  
**C**onventional calls and treatments.  
**A**n aggressive approach along these  
**L**ines on the part of each and every  
**I**ndividual will do much to make sure  
**T**hat Bridge remains the game that  
**Y**ou enjoy so much.

## **PRINCIPLE OF FULL DISCLOSURE**

The philosophy of active ethics tells us that winners should be determined solely by skill, flair and normal playing luck. Actively ethical partnerships go out of their way to make sure that their partnership agreements are made known to their opponents. A major tenet of active ethics is the principle of full disclosure. This means that all information available to your partnership must be made available to your opponents.

Let us take a look at partnership agreements concerning weak two-bids from the point of view of full disclosure. When an established partnership opens a weak two-bid, they have a great deal of information of which their opponents might not be aware. The convention card discloses the point range but little else. However, the partners are aware of the range of hands on which the bid can be made (discipline?, suit quality requirements?, five-or seven-card suits allowed?, side four-card major ok?, void ok?, positional variations?, etc.). Full disclosure requires that all these inferences, restrictions and tendencies be made known to any opponent who may inquire about partnership style.

If you are interested in knowing these things about your opponent's bid, merely say to the bidder's partner, "Would you tell me more about your style?" You may use the "style inquiry" to ask about any call your opponent makes.

The actively ethical player will often go beyond what is technically required in volunteering information to the opponents. Quite often, the declaring side in an actively ethical partnership will volunteer such information before the opening lead is made. (But remember when there is misinformation given, such as a failure to alert or a mis-alert, there is a legal obligation on the player whose partner misinformed the opponents. He, the bidder, must give the opponents the correct information at the end of the auction if his side is the declaring side or at the end of the play if his side is defending.)

New players or infrequent partnerships usually will not have understandings about the items discussed here and, of course, it will be perfectly proper for them to reply "We have no agreement as to style."

## **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR**

Active ethics enables players to compete on equal terms. In addition, the actively ethical player contributes to the enjoyment of all players by continuously striving to maintain a courteous attitude toward both his/her opponents and his/her partner and by avoiding any behavior that would make anyone uncomfortable. These social attributes are vital to the game of bridge and duplicate bridge.

## **SLOW PLAY**

Failure to finish on time can do a great deal to chase players away from the game and is extremely distressing to waiting players. Bridge is a timed event. If a pair takes more than their share of the allotted time for each round, they are inconveniencing their fellow competitors as well as gaining an unfair advantage over them. When a pair has fallen behind it is incumbent on them to make up the time lost as quickly as possible — whether at fault or not.

The actively ethical player makes a concerted effort to catch up when they have fallen behind, regardless of the reason for their lateness. All players are expected to develop this good habit. Remember, slow play is subject to penalty, and the penalties are well earned when slow pairs disrupt the normal progression of the game.

Additionally, players should be available to start each subsequent round promptly, avoiding wherever possible being late to a table for non-bridge reasons.

## STATEMENTS ON CONVENTIONS

The latest version of the *Laws of Duplicate Bridge* defines a ‘convention’ as a call that, by partnership agreement, conveys a meaning other than willingness to play in the denomination named (or in the last denomination named) or other than the high-card strength or length (three cards or more) there.

All ACBL events are governed by the appropriate convention chart which lists those conventions permitted in the event. Conventions not included on the chart are not permitted in the event.

Part of the right to use a convention is the responsibility of deciding when it applies in probable auctions. The opponents may be entitled to redress if you did not originally have a clear understanding with your partner of when and how to use a convention you are playing.

For example, a partnership that chooses to play conventional bids over opponents’ notrump opening bids is expected to have discussed at least the following:

1. Does it apply over strong no trumps?
2. Does it apply over weak no trumps?
3. Does it apply in the direct seat?
4. Does it apply in the balancing chair?
5. Does it apply when used by a passed hand?

We all occasionally encounter situations where we are not sure what partner’s bidding means. There exists an added responsibility if that uncertainty arises from a convention you and your partner have agreed to play. In these situations, you should tell your opponents all you know. Sometimes, the director will even ask you or your partner to step away from the table so that the opponents can talk openly with the remaining player.

The actively ethical player does everything possible in these situations to bring his opponents back to even terms to remove any possible disadvantage accruing to them from his side’s failure to have a complete conventional understanding.