



For the Record

BY **ROBB GORDON** | ACBL National Recorder

What is Active Ethics?

The concept of Active Ethics rests on four pillars:

1. The principle of full disclosure. Bridge is not like poker. Your opponents have a right to know any agreements you have, whether explicit or implicit. The Alerting regulations are a guide, and they occasionally change. But if you think a simple Alert (or even non-Alert) might fool your opponent, then over-Alert! When you are the declaring side, make sure any undisclosed or misdisclosed agreements are straightened out for the opponents *before* the opening lead. If it involves a failure to Alert or misinformation, there is still an irregularity that may need to be adjudicated by a director, but at least you have mitigated the damage. If you are the defending side, you may not clarify any misinformation for the opponents until the deal is over. It may well be best to call the director to adjudicate if there was potential damage.

2. Conventions. Along with the principle of full disclosure, knowing what your agreements are is necessary. How often do we sit down with a new partner and agree to play some convention and never discuss follow-up situations? It is impossible to discuss *every* situation, but certainly you should know the more common sequences. Not only is this Actively Ethical, it will improve your bridge results in the long run. Of course, bad feelings are created when you get lucky with your misunderstanding and the opponents get fixed. That is not Actively Ethical!

3. Friendly demeanor. Bridge is a serious game and the competition can be intense. But unlike many activities, bridge is often played with and against players of unequal ability. Actively Ethical players are courteous, friendly and always try to make their opponents feel at ease. Actively Ethical players compliment opponents on their good play and never humiliate or criticize partner or opponents. Actively Ethical players call the director in a pleasant tone and accept rulings with graciousness, even if they do not agree and even if they wish to appeal the ruling. The keys are respect and the Golden Rule.

4. Tempo and pace of play. Bridge is a thinking game and sometimes a player needs time. But in general, players should maintain a consistent tempo, neither too fast nor too slow, and pause after a jump in the bidding. Also, a player should do their utmost to play within the allotted time. When they fall behind, it is incumbent on the partnership to catch up as quickly as possible. It is painful to follow a pair who uses three minutes of your 15-minute round every time, and sometimes it slows the entire field! If your bridge experience rests on these four pillars, you will make the game more pleasant for everyone.

Finally, I would like to reproduce an acronym that promoted the program at its inception 30 years ago:

A primary objective of the ACBL is to
Continue the concerted effort begun at
The Fall 1986 Atlanta NABC to try to
Instill in all players the concept that
Vigorous efforts should be made to insure
Equity and enjoyment are benchmarks of bridge.
Every player should strive to make sure
That opponents have in no way been
Harmed through incomplete or misleading
Information as to the meanings of his pair's
Conventional calls and treatments.
An aggressive approach along these
Lines on the part of each and every
Individual will do much to make sure
That bridge remains the game that
You enjoy so much.