

Bridge Communications

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Good bridge is all about communications. You communicate with somebody, usually everybody at the table, each time you enter the auction (bid), when the final contract is established, and when you, as declarer, play the hand.

- Huh? Isn't declarer just supposed to shut up and ask partner to play a card to each trick!?? Or is it legal for declarer to...
 - ask dummy if she has taken out all the trumps because she can't remember? Yes ___ No ___
 - ask dummy to look in opponents' hands and let her know where the heart king is? Yes?? ___
 - tell let hand opponent (LHO) that she loves her new haircut? Yes ___ No ___
 - ask defender's partner to reveal the meaning of the opening lead? Yes ___ No ___
- How about the defenders? May they communicate? ___
 - With the opposing declarer? ___
 - With each other? ___
 - How can they communicate with each other besides winking, pointing to their heart or diamond (ring), etc.? _____
 - Can declarer take advantage of defenders' communication skills? _____
 - Paying attention to defensive communications is probably the best way to improve your game.

Let's practice some communication examples. The *first example* (below) is where South, the dealer, opens 1H. What questions might West ask dealer's partner, North, about the opening bid prior to bidding herself?

- Must North answer honestly? ___ Can East ask a question or two? _____
- After asking North her questions, West bids 1S.
 - What questions might North ask East about West's 1S bid? _____
- North bids 1NT. Who can ask questions about North's bid? An example? _____
- East bids 2C. How can the N/S team get a better understanding of East's bid? _____
- South passes.
- West passes, and North should probably pass as well, correct? _____ Can North ask South if she should pass? _____
- Well, let's assume that North doesn't pass, but bids 2NT, and everyone follows with a pass. East leads the nine of diamonds. May North communicate with East? ___ West? _____
- Isn't this fun? _____

Another example. East opens 1NT.

- What does West say immediately, not even waiting for South to bid? _____
- After West's words of wisdom and honesty, South passes.
- West bids 2D and East immediately says _____.
- North doubles West's 2D bid. What does that mean? _____
- East bids 2H. Why? _____
- South passes, West passes, and North passes. End of auction.

Before playing the hand, East should ask the N/S team about their defensive signals and first discards. And after the lead, always ask leader's partner to explain the lead.

These two examples show how much information is shared during the auction, and both sides should be paying close attention, because that information may influence leads, defensive signals, play of hand, and how many more DOT'S PRETZELS you dare eat before the game is over. There are many more communications examples for defenders, and *you should spend a great deal of time discussing these with your partners, and paying attention to them* during the game.

OK, your assignment for today (and forever): Communicate! And that includes listening and observing carefully. Bridge is a game of communications, more so than any other card game ever invented.