

Dummy's Rights and Wrongs by Matthew McManus, International Bridge Director

Occasionally, perhaps unwisely, you have to let partner play a hand. As you watch from your position as dummy, you may experience a degree of apprehension. In this article, I would like to describe what the laws say you can and cannot do while you are dummy.

After the opening lead is faced, dummy places his cards face up on the table, sorted into suits with the lowest cards closest to declarer, and with trumps, if any, on dummy's right.

Apart from this, there are no other requirements in the laws as to the arrangement of the suits.

There is nothing which **demand**s that the suits must be placed black/red/black/red or spades/hearts/diamonds/clubs, as some players seem to believe.

One thing that dummy should ensure is that all 13 cards are visible. If the defenders mis-defend because one of dummy's cards is hidden, then the director is likely to rule in their favour.

During the play, dummy is significantly limited in what he is able to do.

One right that dummy does have is to attempt to prevent an irregularity from occurring. So, if you see partner about to play a card from his own hand when the lead is in dummy, or if he is about to call for a card from dummy when the lead is in his own hand, you can pipe up and try to stop him. However, once the irregularity has occurred, you can no longer say anything - it is up to the defenders to point out the infraction. So if declarer calls for the "ace of spades", you don't say, "You're in hand". You should just play the AS and let the other players say something if they notice.

Secondly, as dummy, you may check that partner hasn't revoked when he fails to follow suit. This is usually accomplished by dummy saying something like, "No clubs, partner?" and declarer confirming that he hasn't revoked by replying, "Having none." (Note that this right to check is lost if dummy has done something foolish like looking at declarer's or a defender's hand.)

Otherwise, dummy is just there to play the cards on Declarer's instruction.

Dummy may perhaps ask declarer to repeat the card he called for if he (honestly) didn't hear. Apart from that, dummy is seriously restricted in what he can say or do during the hand.

Some of the things that you might want to do, but **CANNOT include:**

- **Tell partner he has a trick pointed the wrong way after a lead has been made to the next trick**
- **Play a card before it is called for by declarer (even if it is a singleton)**
- **Express surprise at partner's choice of card from dummy**
- **Encourage partner to play dummy's little card which you know is good, but he doesn't seem to**
- **Call the director before anyone else has drawn attention to an infraction**
- **Ask a defender if he has revoked**

At the end of the hand, dummy now has the right to point out any infractions that he noticed during play. For example, this is the time when you can point out that revoke you saw that no one else did. But don't do it beforehand as you may jeopardise your right to redress from the director.