



INTRODUCTION TO DUPLICATE

BY SIMON AINGER

AND UPDATED BY

DAVID STEVENSON

If I had not derived great pleasure from playing duplicate bridge over many years, I would not have been persuaded to write this booklet. I say this because there are things which, on the face of it, may cause the social player some concern; all this talk about ‘alerts’ and ‘stops’ and such like. Be assured that the techniques of duplicate are easily and quickly absorbed and that it is played, in the great majority of clubs, as among friends and completely free of any legalistic hassle.

Certainly, of its nature, duplicate bridge is competitive and success or failure is both measured and evident. You can still bemoan your bad luck, from time to time, but, overall, it’s a level playing table and you can’t hide behind poor cards and wrong finesses. Maybe it is enjoyed most by those who relish the challenge to improve but, to all, it offers stimulation and the opportunity for new friendships.

Simon Ainger

THE BASICS

In duplicate, compass points are assigned to distinguish the two pairs playing at the same table. Thus North-South play against East-West. In rubber bridge, these two pairs are in direct opposition. Success or failure depends partly on skill, but very much on luck in the quality of the hands that you are dealt.

In duplicate pairs, North-South and East-West are not in direct competition against each other but, instead, each pair is competing against every other pair sitting in the same direction and who will hold exactly the same cards. As North-South, for example, your score on every hand played, will be

compared with all the scores achieved by the other North-South pairs. The quality of the hand that you hold is therefore irrelevant to success; it is whether you do better than the other North-South pairs that is critical. You do not need good cards to win.

This is what happens. At the start, the players at any one table shuffle the cards and deal the initial deals (usually two or three) for the first round of the competition. Suppose that there is a total of nine tables and 27 deals are to be played overall, then each table will deal three deals initially. These same deals will subsequently move round all the other tables. For this to happen, it is obvious that, firstly, each player must retain his individual hand intact and, secondly, that the individual hands must be stored so they can be moved to another table.

The first objective is achieved in the manner of playing to each trick. Instead of playing the cards in the centre of the table, as you would do at rubber bridge, each player plays his card directly in front of him. When his side wins a trick, he turns his card over upright and, when he loses a trick, sideways. Progressively it looks like this:



Your side lost the first trick, won the next two and lost the fourth. The pattern continues until all the cards are played.

The second objective is achieved by having what is called a ‘board’ into which the hands are placed after the play of the hand ends. These are usually

made of rigid plastic (sometimes they are soft plastic wallets) with slots for individual hands. It might look like this:



Since each original hand is placed (or, subsequently, replaced) in its designated slot, the same hands are played when the sets of boards are moved from table to table.

You will notice that both the dealer and the vulnerability for each hand (board) is given. In duplicate, every hand is a separate entity with both the dealer and the vulnerability determined according to a set pattern. The dealer might be indicated in writing or with an arrow; the vulnerability in writing or colour-coded (red or orange for vulnerable, white or green for non-vulnerable).

There also has to be a record of every pair’s score (you will be assigned a number for identification) on each deal and this is handled by having a scoreslip which travels with the board (it goes into that slot at the bottom) and is known as a ‘traveller’. They vary in size and design but a simple example is given on the next page.

Finally, there needs to be a ‘movement’ to determine how the boards and the pairs will move during the session. This is the responsibility of a ‘director’. Movements and directors will be discussed later. ►

Introduction to Duplicate continued

THE TRAVELLER

The initial, uncompleted, travelling scoreslip may look like this:

BOARD NUMBER							
PAIRS NS	No. EW	Contract	By	Tricks	NORTH-SOUTH		Match Points
					Plus	Minus	
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							

The score is entered after the play of any board ends. Custom, though not law, gives this responsibility to North but East or West should check the entry. The number of the board must be written at the top. The North-South pair numbers are usually pre-printed and North fills in the row opposite the pair number that he has been assigned (beware of mistakenly using the board number). The East-West pair number goes in the next column, then the contract (identify a doubled contract by adding 'x' and a redoubled contract by adding 'xx'), the declarer (N, E, S or W), the number of tricks made and, finally, the score as related to North-South. The columns on the right, headed 'Matchpoints', are for the use of the person scoring the event overall.

If the overall scoring is done by computer, the North-South pair number column may be blank and the score is entered on the first available line.

THE SCORING

Since each board is a separate entity, with pre-determined vulnerability, duplicate scoring is slightly different from rubber bridge. A vulnerable game earns a bonus of 500 points, a non-vulnerable game 300 points and a part-score 50 points, irrespective of vulner-

ability. There is no bonus for 'honours'. The actual score plus the value of overtricks and any bonus are all added together to produce a composite figure (no below and above the line). This is then entered either in the North-South plus column or the North-South minus column. In other respects, duplicate scoring is exactly the same as in rubber.

HOW A PAIRS' EVENT IS SCORED OVERALL

At the end of the session, there will be a completed traveller for every board played. The scorer now takes over. Each board is scored independently. This means that, if you have a terrible result on one deal, the worst score recorded in your direction (known as a 'bottom' in contrast to the best score, known as a 'top'), you will score badly only on that particular board in isolation. Lose 1,700 points on one deal in rubber bridge and it will cost dearly. In duplicate, it means only a single bad board out of many played.

The scorer takes each traveller and matchpoints it. He assigns every North-South two points for each score they have bettered and one point for each score the same. He gives complementary matchpoint scores to East-West. If North-South gain 16 matchpoints (here the top score) then East-West must get zero matchpoints for the bottom score in that direction.

Let us look at a traveller which has been matchpointed:

BOARD NUMBER 1							
PAIRS NS	No. EW	Contract	By	Tricks	NORTH-SOUTH		Match Points
					Plus	Minus	
1	1	2C	N	9	110		11 5
2	3	3C	N	8		50	3 13
3	5	3NT	N	9	400		15 1
4	7	2D	E	7	50		6 10
5	9	3D	E	7	100		8 8
6	2	3NT	N	8		50	3 13
7	4	2C	N	9	110		11 5
8	6	5C	N	9		100	0 16
9	8	3NT	N	9	400		15 1
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							

Pair 1 has a better score than five other pairs (5 x 2 points) and has the same score as one other pair (1 point), giving them 11 points on this board. You can see that the matchpoints for East-West, shown in the right-hand column, are complementary to the North-South matchpoints.

Note that North-South pairs 3 and 9 achieved their good result because they had the best scores and not because they bid and made a game. Had they bid and made just 2NT (+120), they would have gained the same matchpoint scores.

If a hand is passed out, North enters the East-West pair number on the traveller, writes 'passed out' alongside it and enters '0' in the North-South column. As a matchpointed score, it takes its place midway between the North-South plus and minus scores.

Sometimes, when things go wrong at the table, the director needs to award a matchpointed score in the absence of a valid normal score. This will usually be related to average, either average itself (50%, exactly half a top) or average plus (at least 60%) or average minus (at most 40%). The introduction of an average will involve a slight adjustment to the other matchpointed scores.

After matchpointing all the travellers, the scores for every pair on each board are recorded and totalled to produce a separate result for the North-South pairs and the East-West pairs. Sometimes the movement is designed to produce only one overall winning pair and consequently that will be the pair with the highest overall percentage. It may happen that one or more pairs play fewer hands than the majority of the field but, when this happens, their overall score will be factored up to compensate.

In practice, few scorers work by hand any more. Scores are entered into a computer, and results are nearly always shown in percentages. 50% is an average session, 60% is good, 70% is brilliant. Normally, 62%-63% will win a session.

More and more clubs use Bridgemates for scoring. North enters the score into an electronic box designed for the purpose, and East checks it. Then the percentage score at the time on that board is shown and earlier scores may be seen.

Since the scores are transmitted immediately by radio to the central computer, clubs with Bridgemates often have screens showing everyone's

Introduction to Duplicate continued

score, which is updating constantly. Travellers are not needed when using Bridgemates.

THE PERSONAL SCORECARD

In duplicate pairs, the travellers are used as the official record for the scores, but there are personal scorecards for your own use. It is normal, though not required, for at least one of the partnership to keep a scorecard. In format, it looks much the same as the traveller.

The main reason for such a card is for your own interest so do not keep one if you do not want to.

Score cards are often on the back of a basic 'Convention Card', which is discussed below. When playing duplicate teams, keeping a personal scorecard is usually essential for the overall scoring. In the Score columns, you record your own plus or minus score (as distinct from only the North-South score on the traveller) and, when converting to IMPs, the left-hand Matchpoints column is used to record a plus IMP score on each hand and the right-hand column a minus. The scale for conversion to IMPs is printed on the scorecard (see TEAMS).

THE CONVENTION CARD

BASIC SYSTEM	<i>Acol</i>	
Opening 1NT range NV	<i>12-14</i>	Vul. <i>12-14</i> 4th. <i>12-14</i>
Responses	<i>Stayman</i>	
Responses to one level opening bids: Natural/Artificial		
Opening 2 bids	2C <i>Acol</i>	2D <i>Acol</i>
	2H <i>Acol</i>	2S <i>Acol</i>
Responses	<i>Neg: 2D over 2C, 2NT over 2D, 2H, 2S</i>	
Opening 3 bids	<i>Weak</i>	4 bids
1NT overall	<i>16-18</i>	2NT overall <i>19-21</i>
Defence to pre-empts:	Weak twos	<i>X for T.O</i>
Weak threes	<i>X for T.O</i>	Higher bids <i>X for T.O</i>
Defence to 1NT		
Defence to strong 1C		
Doubles:	Sputnik	Responsive
Others		
Jump overcalls	<i>Strong</i>	
Slam conventions	<i>Blackwood</i>	
Other conventions		

Above is a Convention Card. This card is very simple, but perfectly acceptable for a basic system. It has been filled in where appropriate. It shows that the pair is playing an Acol-based natural system with Stayman, Blackwood and 'Double' (X being used as shorthand) for take-out after an opening preemptive bid by the opposition.

The second part of the card shows carding methods.

This shows that the pair's basic lead style accords with the table of standard leads and that signals and discards are high to encourage and low to discourage (HELD).

LEADS	Basic method <i>4th highest</i>			
Please circle opening lead from a suit headed by:				
<i>A</i> K x	<i>A</i> J 10	<i>K</i> J 10	<i>K</i> Q 9	<i>Q</i> J 10
<i>xx</i>	<i>xxx</i>	<i>xxxx</i>	<i>xxxx</i>	<i>xxxxx</i>
<i>Hxx</i>	<i>Hxxx</i>	<i>Hxxxx</i>	<i>Hxxxx</i>	<i>Hxxxxx</i>
(H=HONOUR CARD)				
Other conventions or variations in leading:				
Signals	<i>High-Low enc.</i>	Discards	<i>High-Low enc.</i>	

Pairs who play more sophisticated systems will have a larger and more detailed card. However, in most clubs you will find that the majority of players play only simple conventions, which are easy to understand and there are restrictions on the complex methods that are allowed.

THE BIDDING BOX

The use of bidding boxes, as a substitute for calling out the actual bids during the auction, is becoming increasingly popular and nearly all clubs now use them. They vary in style and layout and some designs cater for left-handed players.

In their most common form, the four boxes on each table are set up at the start of a session, by extracting cards from the base and slotting them into the two sections of the upright box. The bidding cards, with every bid from 1♣ to 7NT visible, are placed in the back section and the other coloured cards in the front. When a bid is made, the appropriate card is removed, together with all the cards stacked behind it, and laid on the table. For example, to bid 2NT, that card and all the cards behind

it in sequence down from 2♠ to 1♣ are laid in a stack on the table with only the 2NT card visible on top of the stack. The same is done with subsequent bids; each stack being laid left to right overlapping the previous stack so that the sequence can be seen. Be careful to be sure of your call before handling the cards in the bidding box. The cards must remain on the table until the initial lead is faced. They are then replaced in the bidding box in the appropriate sections.

The front section of the box contains different coloured cards marked 'Pass', 'Double' (X) and 'Redouble (XX)'. These are placed in sequence on the table exactly like the bidding cards. Now, however, you extract only the one card from that section of the box.

Additionally, this section holds cards marked 'Stop' and 'Alert'. The Stop card takes the place of saying "Stop" before making a jump bid (see later section). It should be placed on the table before adding the appropriate bidding card stack from the back section of the box, but replaced in the box after a pause of about ten seconds. The Alert card replaces the need for the partner of a player making an alertable call to tap on the table, see next section. When your partner makes such a call, you extract the alert card, show it to both opponents and replace it in the box. Other odd cards, eg marked 'director' or 'No smoking' are not used any more.

There is an additional asset to a bidding box, thoughtfully provided on most sets: all the scores are given on the reverse of a bidding card. Suppose you need to calculate 3♠ doubled and made with an overtrick. Look on the back of the 3♠ bidding card and you will find the correct score.

The bad news is that your first encounter with a bidding box will add a distraction to your game that you would rather do without. The good news is that it is not difficult to become at ease with them and you will soon come to appreciate their value.

Some clubs still use spoken bidding as in rubber bridge.

CONVENTIONAL BIDS

In all forms of bridge, you are entitled to know the meaning of an opponent's call and you are allowed to ask the partner of the person making such a call what their agreement of its meaning is. The enquiry may only be made: ▶

- a) when it is your turn to call, or
- b) before you make the opening lead, or
- c) if you are the partner of the defender making the opening lead, after the lead, but before it is faced (opening leads in duplicate must be made face down) or
- d) during the play, when it is your turn to play.

You should not usually ask a question during the auction unless it affects your call. If you have no intention of bidding, best is to wait until it is finished. Such a question could be deemed to give your partner unauthorized information. For example, your opponent opens a natural bid of 1♣ and, before making your call, you ask the meaning. After being told, you pass. Should your partner now lead a club against a no-trump contract, doubts will be raised about the lead. In Scotland and Ireland, satisfy yourself about the strength of the opponents' opening 1NT bid before you start to play against them.

As declarer, you are also entitled, at your turn to play, to enquire about your opponents' agreement about their carding methods: what they lead from suit combinations and what agreement they have when signalling or discarding.

Playing duplicate, you meet many different pairs during the session and therefore, possibly, a variety of conventions. Apart from the fact that you can ask for explanations, there are two other aids. The first is the 'Convention Card', which both members of a pair are required to complete. An opponent is entitled to consult it (but you are not allowed to use it as a memory aid). The second is the 'Alert'.

THE ALERT

The requirement to alert your opponents that a bid made by your partner is either conventional or carries a meaning that may be known to your side, but not to the opponents, is not in the laws of rubber bridge, although it gets a mention as an optional extra which a group can use if they wish. However, in duplicate, alerting is required.

Be clearly aware that it is the partner of the person making the call who alerts. Never alert your own call (you would be alerting your partner as well, wouldn't you?). Always alert a call which you know should be alerted even if you are unable to explain its meaning. If asked, simply explain and suggest that the opponent looks at your convention card or calls the director.

Generally, you alert by showing both opponents your alert card. If bidding boxes are not in use, then you tap the table, or say 'Alert' if you are unable to tap the table.

The rules for alerting are a little different in Scotland and Ireland: the following is true in England and Wales:

Conventional calls should be alerted up to 3NT. For example, if your partner bids Fourth-Suit Forcing, you must alert. You should also alert any call which is natural, but which your opponents would interpret differently. Doubles are a bit tricky: if partner makes a double of a natural suit bid, you alert for any meaning except take-out: if partner makes a double of an artificial suit bid or no-trumps, you alert for any meaning except penalties: again, this is only up to 3NT.

There is no denying that what should and should not be alerted can be confusing. Even experienced duplicate players go wrong and you shouldn't be unduly alarmed if you do. If in doubt, alert and, if you fail to alert when you should have, there will only be a problem if the opponents have been damaged.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

In England and Wales only, some of the simpler positions are covered by Announcements. This is a method of shortcutting the question and answer process: after certain simple bids are made, partner immediately makes a simple description.

If you open a natural 1NT, partner will immediately give the range, eg. "Twelve to fourteen". If he opens 1NT, then, if you bid 2♣ (Stayman), he will say "Stayman": if you bid 2♦ or 2♥ (Transfer) he will say "Hearts" or "Spades". If you open a natural 2-bid,

he will immediately tell the opponents the strength: "Weak", "Intermediate", "Strong, not forcing" or "Strong, forcing". These are the only bids announced: if your partner responds 2♣ to 1NT and you play something else artificial that is not Stayman, then you just alert.

THE STOP BID

A player who makes any bid which misses out one or more levels of bidding (ie a jump bid) must show the Stop card before the bid, and leave it on the table for about ten seconds after making the bid. The reason is to allow time for the player next to call to reflect after what may be an unexpected development. This next player is required to pause for about ten seconds (and may not call until the Stop card is removed) before making a call and this imposed pause is to avoid any inference that the partner of the overcaller might make from a natural hesitation. If bidding boxes are not in use, a player should say 'Stop' before a jump bid.

WHAT ELSE IS DIFFERENT?

THE FACE DOWN OPENING LEAD

This is a sensible rule which should prevent the lead being made from the wrong hand (it is then withdrawn) and which allows the partner to ask questions about the auction without influencing the lead. Before facing your initial lead, you should ask your partner: "Any questions?" or, as you lead face-down, your partner should either ask or say "No questions".

PLAYING DUMMY

In rubber bridge, declarer physically selects a card. In duplicate, declarer must call for a card to be played and dummy does the job by picking it up and placing it on the table in front of him. Be careful to specify both the suit and the rank, and check that your partner plays the card that you called.

QUITTED TRICKS

A trick is quitted when all four players turn their cards over. Thereafter declarer or either defender may inspect, but not expose, his own last card played provided a card has not been led to the next trick. ▶

HAVING NONE, PARTNER?

Dummy may ask declarer in the interests of preventing a revoke and defenders may ask each other.

CHECKING TRICKS WON AND LOST

As dummy or defender, you may notice that your partner has a card pointing the wrong way and, therefore, he may wrongly assume that he has won or lost a trick. You may tell him before the next trick starts, but should not do so at a later time until the hand has ended.

TIMERS

Some clubs have a timer which shows which round it is, and how many minutes are left. There also may be an audible warning when there are three minutes left in the round. While a little strange at first sight, these are an excellent idea, and make life easier for both players and directors to run an evening to time.

'DUPLIMATES'

Some clubs have these (or the equivalent). The boards are dealt by computer and the cards put in the boards by machine. This saves anyone having to deal, the hands tend to be fairer, and copies of all the hands will be available at the end of the evening for you to see all your brilliancies and your partner's mistakes!

A BOARD IS PASSED OUT

When all four players pass, the hands are returned unplayed to the board. North scores 'Passed out'. By law, a board that is passed out must not be redealt.

YOUR FIRST DUPLICATE

You have decided to give duplicate bridge a try and now you must find a club that will welcome you, and where you will feel at ease. This first step is critical since a bad experience could put you off trying again. The first point to be made is that most bridge clubs will positively encourage you. They understand that novice duplicate players have to start somewhere and that fresh blood needs to flow into most clubs.

Inevitably, you will not do yourself justice on your first visit. You will be nervous and you will be paying more attention to the mechanics of the game than to playing. Do not worry that the lower standard of your game might upset those you play against. Your opponents will accept a good result happily! You may annoy yourself but you are unlikely to annoy them.

Nevertheless, you want to play your first duplicate in the most suitable environment. It is advisable, although sometimes not essential, to have a partner in tow. Some clubs will be able to arrange a partner for you and others may have a system whereby a member is on duty to play if a spare player turns up.

But many clubs will require a complete partnership and you will, anyway, feel more comfortable playing with someone you know. There are various ways of finding the appropriate club. If you have recently learnt bridge, ask your teacher. You may have a friend who plays duplicate and who can advise you. There is a Directory of Bridge Clubs which should be available in your local library or which you can buy from Mr Bridge. Similar details are available on websites of the home bridge unions or you could contact them. Of course, you may have no choice of club for reasons of accessibility or the days on which you are able to play, but, if there is a choice, do not be put off approaching a 'big' club. Frequently these clubs have special sessions catering specifically for the inexperienced player and offer courses which you might consider.

Never turn up out of the blue. Contact the secretary of the club and check whether you will be welcome. You will get a 'feel' about this if you talk on the telephone. Say that it is your first duplicate but that you are fully briefed about the mechanics, you have, after all, read these pages. Check the location and time of starting carefully since late players can rarely be accommodated. Ask whom you should contact on arrival.

AT THE CLUB

Let us assume that you have arrived in good time, with your partner, and can

locate the person in charge of getting the session organised. You might ask if you can sit East-West so that you do not have the responsibility of doing the scoring or you might ask for a stationary seat if you find moving difficult. You may be directed to a table and allocated a compass position or you may have a free choice.

You will be expected to pay 'table money' (a fee for the session) and, since you are a visitor, this will be a little more than the members pay. The money may be taken when you arrive or collected at the table. At some stage, your names will be recorded, perhaps when you are assigned a position, or North, at the starting table, will fill in a name slip or put the names and pair numbers on the back of a traveller.

AT THE TABLE

On your table, or shortly to arrive, will be paper and apparatus. Because there are various possibilities as mentioned elsewhere some (or all) of the following will be present.

- 1) Your personal scorecard, probably including a simple convention card on the back which you should fill in while you are waiting. Put your names on the front but wait for further instructions before adding a pair number. Usually, it will be the same number as the starting table, but this is not certain. Do sit opposite your partner while you chat, since, if one is sitting in the North seat and the other in the East seat, the director may assume that your table is complete and that your respective partners will shortly fill it. Note that there is a requirement to fill in a convention card but keeping your own score is optional.
- 2) Name slips to be filled in with the pair numbers once these are known.
- 3) Boards, once the director has decided on the most suitable movement. These are the hands that you will be required to deal for the initial round. Generally, to speed things up and provided at least one member of both pairs is present, players each take a board and deal it in front of them, putting the dealt hands in the appropriate slots. Then, when the action starts, all the hands for the first round are dealt and ready to play. Usually, these are ►

Introduction to Duplicate continued

the only boards that you will actually deal for the whole session. Rarely, boards will need to be dealt during the session. Often, the boards will be pre-dealt. You should be instructed but, if in doubt, always check with the director.

- 4) Hand record cards, if present, are known as ‘curtain cards’. These are slips of thin card on which, after a board has been newly dealt, each individual hand is recorded, suit by suit. The relevant compass position is identified on the back (make sure you have the right one) and there is a space for the suits on the other side. They are generally filled in by each individual player after the play of the hand has finished. Write each suit in descending order eg. A K 7 2. When returning the hand to the board, put the curtain card on top of the stack with the hand details face down.

The curtain cards are a precaution to ensure that, should an error be detected when the boards are played by another table (eg fewer or more than 13 cards in one hand), the director has the data to rectify the problem. Consequently, before you look at any hand, you should count the cards. When you look at your hand, you should check that it corresponds to that written on the curtain card. Call the director, if necessary. To avoid being the cause of a problem, count your cards once again, after the play, before putting them back in the board.

- 5) Travellers, one for each board.
- 6) Bidding boxes, one for each player.
- 7) A ‘Bridgmate’ for North to enter the score.
- 8) A table number.
- 9) A table card, describing pair numbers and boards to play each round, and where to move at the end of the round.

THE DIRECTOR

The role of the director is to ensure that the session runs smoothly. He (or she) will be an experienced member and will sometimes be playing in the event. The director will choose a movement that is

appropriate to the number of tables in play and the number of boards that time permits. He will also be responsible for arbitrating on any problems, in accordance with the ‘Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge’, that may arise during the auction or the play. The director should always be called if any irregularity (lead out of turn, revoke, disputed claim or the like) occurs.

Very rarely, a player may elect to ‘reserve his rights’. This sounds ominous but it is in no way an accusation of improper conduct. It is simply a courtesy to the opponents to alert them, at the time rather than later, to something that has happened which might cause an unfair result and that the director might be asked to adjudicate. The director need not be called when a player reserves rights. It is sufficient, provided the facts are not in dispute, to register the point with the opponents and call the director only if one side thinks it might have been damaged. Do not get upset if an opponent reserves his rights. Look upon the director as a completely impartial judge like a football referee, even if sometimes you don’t agree with his judgement.

The way to summon the director is to call “director, please” and hold up your arm so that he knows who is calling. A playing director may not be able to arrive instantly, and may reserve judgement if it requires seeing hands which he has not played.

THE MOVEMENT

Frankly, you do not need to worry too much about movements. They are the director’s responsibility and you simply follow instructions. There may be movement cards on each table, telling you your pair number and where to go for the next round. If not, your pair number will be the same as the table number for both North-South and East-West (unless the director says otherwise) and the director will announce the move at the end of the round (eg East-West pairs up one table, boards down one table – up is from 1 to 2 etc).

It can happen that there is an odd number of total pairs and consequently there will be a half-table. A pair directed

to that table sits out for that round. Sometimes, there is no half-table but, instead, a ‘floating’ pair displaces a different North-South pair on each round. The displaced pair sits out for one round and then returns to its original table.

The director should always give clear instructions. If in doubt, just ask.

DURING THE SESSION

Barring dire emergency, you must stay for the complete session; we have known occasions when someone wants to give up in mid-session. A session will normally last three to three and a half hours. Since a definitive number of boards must be played in a set time, the director will require the completion of a two-board round in roughly 15 minutes and, therefore, your opponents may get agitated and the director worried if you play unduly slowly. There are some time-saving tips. If you are on lead initially, lead before entering the contract on your personal scorecard. Similarly, dummy should expose his hand before writing down the contract. If you are North, enter the score on the traveller or Bridgmate before updating your scorecard. Never discuss a hand if there is another in the set to play and, if you have time after completing the set, remember that other tables will not have played the board in question and your comments might be overheard.

After a round has been completed, the director will call “move” and the pairs required to move will go, as instructed, to a new table. The boards will also have to move to a different table, usually the next lower-numbered table.

Both pairs should check that they are playing the correct boards against the correct opponents and that a board is placed in the correct compass direction on the table. During both the auction and the play, the board should remain in the centre of the table.

Remember that you are playing to enjoy the game, and so is your partner, whom you should not criticise adversely; no partner plays better under fire. Thank your partner when, as dummy, he spreads his hand, even if it is not what you expect. Be courteous to your opponents. Introduce yourselves and never tell them how they should have bid or played unless asked specifically.

Perhaps now is the time to warn you that clubs tend to have their own eccentricities: practices which are ►

not strictly correct although they do not unduly disturb the game. A board thrown in on the first round might get, unlawfully, redealt; players may have no convention cards (their system being well-known to the regulars); boards might be moved from the centre of the table; bidding box cards might be taken up before a lead is made, and so on. As a visitor, you will not want to make waves but being aware of the correct procedure is no disadvantage.

Clubs may also have their own eccentrics! Don't be upset by a pair arriving at your table and ignoring your greeting. Their minds are probably on the poor result that they got at the previous table. Very rarely, you might come across players who seem aggressive or rude. By far the most effective riposte is to respond with excessive politeness, though, if they are really rude, you should call the director and explain to him what was said.

At the end of the session, you may be asked to remove the curtain cards and to restore the bidding boxes by replacing the cards in the base.

DO YOU NEED TO KNOW THE LAWS OF DUPLICATE?

Basically, no, because the director should be called when anything goes wrong, and, armed with the book of the Laws, will give a ruling. Most duplicate players, though having some knowledge of the Laws through experience, do not see the need to read and understand them. But they often do not know them as well as they think, so do not believe them! Having said that, there are some Laws that it can be valuable to be aware of when you play.

The most important Laws you need to know are:

- 1) You are required to be courteous to everyone else, whether opponents, partner, director, coffee-maker or general hanger-on!
- 2) When attention is drawn to something going wrong you (even if dummy) are required to call the director. It does not matter which side did something wrong: it does not matter if your opponents claim

to know the rules: just call the director.

However, it does speed the game up a bit if you are aware that:

- 3) Any call or lead out of turn or insufficient bid may be accepted by the next opponent even without the director.
- 4) When a player takes the wrong call out of the bidding box by accident he may immediately change it even without the director.

Note also:

- 5) As declarer, you think that you can win all the remaining tricks and you make a claim accordingly, stating your proposed line of play. A defender disputes your claim and requires you to play the hand as he directs. Is he allowed to do this?

No. If there is a disputed claim, play must cease and the director called. He will adjudicate on the disputed claim taking into account any statement made about the proposed line of play when the claim was made. The director will assume that you could play carelessly but not irrationally.

Claims are a good thing because they speed the game up enormously but when one goes wrong, do not argue about it: call the director!

HOW DID YOU DO?

Some clubs, with their own premises and a computer, may produce a result within minutes of the end of the session, but, usually, the result will only be known the next time you go to the club. Hopefully, you will have enjoyed the experience enough for there to be a next time. Many clubs post results on the internet these days.

OTHER FORMS OF DUPLICATE

We have concentrated on 'Matchpointed Duplicate Pairs' since this is by far the most common form of duplicate played in bridge clubs and on

bridge holidays. Almost certainly, this will be your first experience of duplicate. There are other forms.

TEAMS

Instead of being a pair, competing against other pairs sitting in the same direction, you are a team of four players competing against one or several other teams, depending on the event. This is how it works.

Suppose that there are just two teams playing a head to head match. One pair of the team plays North-South at the first table and their team-mates play East-West at the second table. A set of boards is played at both tables, with the hands being retained as in pairs, and then the boards are switched between the two tables and replayed.

There is a direct comparison of the scores (computed on each board) achieved by both teams. When the set of boards has been played at both tables, the East-West pairs return to their North-South team-mates to score. Each board is taken in isolation to arrive at an aggregate score on every board. Suppose Team 1 achieves a North-South plus score of 420 on one board and their East-West team-mates score is minus 170. There is a net overall plus to Team 1 (and consequently a net overall minus to Team 2) of 250 (420 less 170). Usually, this score then gets converted to 'International Matchpoints', known as IMPs, by reference to a set conversion scale which is printed on the personal scorecards. In fact, 250 converts into 6 IMPs so that, on this particular board, Team 1 gains 6 IMPs and Team 2 loses 6 IMPs. After all the boards have been scored, the IMP totals in the plus and minus columns are aggregated to produce a plus or minus score (in overall IMPs) for both teams. An overall plus score wins this match. Usually head to head matches are played in 'stanzas': eg if there are 24 boards to be played overall, they might be played in stanzas of 6, 8 or 12 boards, which are scored before the next stanza.

Sometimes, after determining the overall IMP score, a further conversion is made to 'Victory Points' (VPs). Again this is on a set, published scale.

When several teams are competing against one another in a 'Multiple Teams' event, there are movements to make sure that the same boards are played against the same team. ►

In teams matches, scoring is done by keeping a record on the personal scorecards. After converting the aggregate difference to IMPs, an IMP plus score is entered on the left-hand column of the two columns headed 'Matchpoints' (on the right of the personal scorecard) and a minus IMP score in the right-hand column. The scores are totalled and subtracted to get the overall plus or minus IMP score for both teams. The scores must complement each other.

INDIVIDUALS

As the name implies, these are duplicate events in which you compete as an individual rather than a pair or a team. They are good fun, but rare, since the movements can be complicated and the scoring time-consuming. They are run as a pairs event, except that you change partners every round and therefore, when it is scored, there is an individual winner.

SWISS COMPETITIONS

You may see some competitions advertised as 'Swiss Pairs' or 'Swiss Teams' and both are popular formats although the latter, being easier to run, are more favoured. The principle in both is that competitors who are doing equally well, or equally badly, are matched to play against each other. Short matches are played against one pair or one team and, after the result of each match is known, the pairs or the teams are re-matched according to their running scores. Generally, a minimum of six separate matches is involved and the format means that a pair or a team which starts badly has the chance to climb up the ladder in the course of the competition.

NEWCOMER DUPLICATES

Sponsoring bodies, which include the home bridge unions, county, district and area associations and bridge clubs, are keen to encourage newcomers to duplicate and there are competitions organised to suit them.

SIMULTANEOUS PAIRS

National and international sponsoring bodies regularly hold 'Simultaneous Pairs' duplicates, providing details of the hands to all participating clubs, so that the event can be matchpointed over the whole field. The clubs arrange for the boards to be made up.

The scores are sent off to the organising body to be matchpointed, often by e-mail (though a local result may also be scored) and there is an overall national or international results list. This is frequently done on the internet these days: players can see their scores there almost immediately, and watch them change as more results come in.

MASTERPOINTS

A club which is affiliated to one of the home unions is entitled to issue 'Masterpoints' for success in any of its duplicates.

There is a graded award to the top third of the field (or, in a major event, the top half) and they are usually given out as actual certificates. When members of a home union (the points are interchangeable) accumulate a total of 200 such points, they can send them to headquarters and they are recorded as 'club masters', the first rung in the scale of achievement in duplicate bridge.

The collection of additional points enables members to achieve progressively higher rankings. County, National and Congress competitions award Masterpoints on a higher scale. Basic Masterpoints are known as 'local points' or 'black points' but, to achieve the higher levels of the system, you need to acquire 'green points' or 'red points', awarded in major competitions organised at national, county, area or district level.

Masterpoints are valid for three years and this means that you can start collecting them without being a member of a union and register them, if and when you decide to become one.

TACTICS WITH TEAMS SCORING

Tactics at teams scoring are very similar to those at rubber bridge. You should always try to make your contract if you can and you should always try to defeat your opponents if you can. You should certainly never let overtricks interfere with these objectives.

The only difference is that you should be more aggressive when bidding game contracts, particularly when you are vulnerable. This is because, when the aggregate score on any one hand is converted to IMPs, there is a bias in favour of a successful game contract.

TACTICS WITH MATCH-POINTED PAIRS SCORING

It is very important to appreciate the different tactics needed when playing matchpointed pairs. This difference is due to the method of scoring. Let us look at a traveller for Board 2.

BOARD NUMBER 2							
PAIRS NS	No EW	Contract	By	Tricks	NORTH-SOUTH		Match Points
					Plus	Minus	
1	1	3NT	N	10	630		0 16
2	3	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
3	5	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
4	7	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
5	9	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
6	2	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
7	4	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
8	6	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
9	8	3NT	N	11	660		9 7
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							

This looks a pretty dull hand: a cold game contract and bid by every North-South pair in the room. All have made two overtricks except for Pair 1. At teams or rubber bridge, this would be of minimal importance. But, at pairs, it has resulted in a 'bottom' for North-South and a consequent 'top' for East-West.

Was North careless? Did East-West find a brilliant defence? Either way, it has significantly cost one side and rewarded the other. ■

Why not try your first duplicate at a Mr Bridge Gentle Duplicate event, designed for newcomers to duplicate? For full details ☎ 01483 489961.