

Hesitations

It is NOT an infraction to hesitate during the bidding or play if you have a bridge reason to do so (if you are just thinking about tomorrow's lunch, that IS an infraction!).

But it does create ethical problems for your partner and they are obliged not to take advantage. This means that any action that they take should be biddable on their own hand without reading anything into your hesitation.

Generally hesitating and passing makes life most difficult for your partner. This is because you have shown some desire to bid, by hesitating, and then shown no values by passing. People who do not know the laws will often say, "your partner has hesitated, you are not allowed to bid", but this is not true – you are not permitted to take advantage of your partner's hesitation, but if you have a completely obvious bid then you should make it.

At the table it will normally be clear to everyone that there has been a hesitation. But if you believe there is doubt, then you should call the Director to confirm that there was one. He will assess the situation, but just tell you to complete the hand and call him back if you feel that you were damaged by the hesitation or actions thereafter.

Hesitations come under the category of **unauthorised information** (similar to incorrect or missed alerts). Any information that you get from your partner that is not directly from the bidding or play is unauthorised and you must not take advantage of it. This includes information from partner's style of questions (does 2♣ show clubs? How many clubs? Etc suggesting a club lead), the "I don't know what to do" comment (suggests doubt about final action), and the 'French' defence to 1NT (pass with 0-9 points, ask the range of 1NT with 10-14 points, double with 15+).

Example

South

♠ 108
♥ AQJ10
♦ KJ2
♣ 10982

North	South
1♥	3♥
4NT	5♦ (1 ace)
5♥ ...	?

Your partner takes a long time to bid 5♥, clearly considering bidding slam. With your good trumps, it is pretty clear that he is probably missing one ace and is concerned about trumps. So you should clearly bid 6♥ – WRONG, this is cheating.

Often the way to consider this is to imagine that your partner did the opposite, and bids a very quick 5♥. Now you'd think that you were missing two aces and pass without thought. So doing anything other than this is taking advantage of partner's hesitation.

South
 ♠ 108
 ♥ J1096
 ♦ QJ2
 ♣ 10982

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	3♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl...	Pass	?

Partner makes a very slow double after your minimum raise. Should you pass or run to 4♥?

You must pass. You have shown your hand and it is only the speed of partner's double that tells you that he is gambling. If he stood on his chair, waving a flag, shouting, "we've got them", you'd pass in a shot. If partner doubled at normal pace, you may pass or bid 4♥ with no ethical issues.

Stop card

Before making a jump bid (ie a bid at a higher level than the minimum in that denomination) a player should place the Stop card in front of them, then place their bid as usual, and eventually remove the Stop card. Their LHO should not bid until the Stop card has been removed.

The Stop card should be left on the table for about ten seconds, to give the next player time to reflect. It should not be removed prematurely.

After a jump bid, the next player MUST pause for about ten seconds before bidding. It is an offence either not to pause or to show indifference when pausing. If the Stop card has been removed prematurely or has not been used, an opponent should nevertheless pause as though the Stop card had been used correctly.

Example

The use of the Stop card is particularly important in competitive auctions, for example,

West	North	East	South
1♥	Dbl	4♥	?

Without the Stop card, South is under pressure to make a very quick decision. What often used to happen is that South passed quickly with no values, hesitated and passed to show some values, and bid with full values. With the Stop card, South must now wait with no values to pass and there are no ethical concerns when South passes and North then takes action.