

Slow Play is Selfish Play

The real keys to playing fast are in forming habits that serve to keep the game moving and staying alert at the table. Suppose the auction goes 1NT on your right, you pass and LHO makes a transfer. You are likely to be on opening lead eventually, and you should start figuring out what your best lead might be against NT or against the suit about to be bid by RHO. Once the auction is over, you can immediately place a card on the table. After your lead is turned face up, you can write the contract on your personal score sheet as declarer studies dummy.

Arriving at the table: This is where most of the time goes. It is important to greet your opponents, however, a smile and a hello are all that are needed and don't forget to pull your cards from the board at the same time.

Bidding: Check the dealer and vulnerability on the board before sorting your cards. The number one timing problem in bidding consists of players not realising it is their turn.

Before the opening lead: Once the bidding is over, declarer and the person not on lead should record the contract on their personal score cards. Dummy and the opening leader may do this after the lead and dummy have been faced.

The play: Declarer should always think for at least 10 seconds before playing to the first trick from dummy. Time taken at the first trick is not time wasted; this is a good time to plan; it helps the tempo later in the game. E.G. Declarer leads towards an ace-queen in dummy, LHO follows low smoothly, there is no need for declarer to go into the tank again. Surely the idea was to play the Q so play it. Also if you are running a long suit from hand you should have decided at the beginning which losers in dummy you were going to discard, or as a defender which cards you can let go. If you are in trouble, long thinks won't make the impossible possible, so if you're going down, go down gracefully – and quickly. At least you will have the full time for the next hand.

Claiming: Many players are nervous about claiming. If you're on defence and you can see that dummy is good (and you know that partner cannot win another trick), concede. It saves time.

Irregularities: Save time call the director immediately. Become familiar with the basic rules so you can make quick decisions once the director has arrived.

After trick thirteen: Always put the score on the traveller first, before you enter the score on your own scorecard. If North/South begin talking East or West should take the traveller out and hand it to South. If you are playing more than one board North should place the second board on the table while South is scoring. Save the post mortems for the end of the round.

At all times: Keep an eye on the clock. When the first buzzer goes this is a warning that East/West are about to move. When the second buzzer sounds one member of the partnership should move as soon as possible. This allows the next table to begin the next board. Even if the next table has not finished, stand up so the director can see you are ready and waiting.

The Golden Rule: Too many players refuse to speed up their game after a pair arrives late, since they feel that they were not responsible for the original delay. If your opponents arrive late at your table, for whatever reason, all four of you are responsible for trying to catch up.

The Golden Rule is that there is only one person responsible for slow play: you. No matter what the circumstances, even if you've never been late getting to a table in your life: if you make no effort to catch up, you are guilty.

Fast players don't play "*fast*". They just slow the game down less often.

Slow players don't play "*slow*". They use bidding and playing time for other things.

Yes, Bridge is a social occasion, but use your time to socialise – not the opponents or the next table's time.