

That's Insufficient

Partner opens the bidding 1H, and you look at your ace third in trump support, singleton diamond, and five solid clubs.¹ Visions of a possible slam start dancing in your head, but you know you need to go slowly. You put the 2C bid on the table, and your LHO says, "Director, please!" What happened? You were so involved with your hand's possibilities that you never noticed your RHO's bid of 2D! *Your 2C bid is insufficient.* **Do not do anything until the director comes to the table!** If you try to correct your bid, you run the risk of adding unauthorized information to your insufficient bid.

When the director comes to the table, the first thing he or she will do is question you. Did you intend to bid 2C, or was the 2C bid mistakenly pulled from the bid box? You can correct a mechanical error without penalty, but you can't correct a "slip of the mind." Answer honestly. Your hand usually makes it obvious what you intended.

Insufficient Bid: Accepted

You intended to bid 2C. Your LHO, the next person to act, has the option to accept that bid. If the bid is accepted, the auction proceeds as normal and there is no penalty. Why would LHO accept your bid? In the example, if LHO accepts your 2C bid, he or she could bid 2D, thereby raising partner's suit without actually raising the level of the bidding! It's a cheap way to show support without showing values.

Insufficient Bid: Not Accepted

Most often, the insufficient bid is not accepted. In that case, *you must correct the bid by substituting a sufficient bid or a pass.* **Note that you may not correct the bid with a double or redouble.**

- ♣ If you correct your insufficient bid with the lowest sufficient bid in the same denomination, there is no penalty. In our example, you would substitute a 3C bid, and the auction would go on as if nothing had happened.
- ♣ If you make any other sufficient bid, your partner will be barred from the auction, and there may be lead penalties.
- ♣ If you pass, your partner will be barred from the auction, and there may be lead penalties.

¹ How's your bridge jargon? Do you know what this hand looks like? The answer is on the last page.

Lead Penalties? What Does That Mean?

In our example hand, bidding 3C is an easy correction; but suppose you held a hand just barely good enough for a 2C bid, but not really good enough to substitute a sufficient 3C bid. Instead, you correct by bidding 2H. LHO bids 3D, and the opponents play that contract. Look what has happened.

- ♣ Your partner knows that you have a club suit, but that knowledge is *unauthorized information*, because your 2C bid was cancelled. You never bid clubs legally.
- ♣ At your partner's first turn to lead, declarer may require the lead of the withdrawn suit bid, clubs, in this case; *or*,
- ♣ At your partner's first turn to lead, declarer may forbid the lead of the withdrawn suit bid, clubs, in this case. This prohibition holds as long as your partner retains the lead.

Let's Add a Twist

In our example hand, your 2C bid was a natural call; but, what if your partner had opened the bidding 1NT? Now, a 2C bid would be conventional, and if LHO does not accept it, there's a big penalty. If either the insufficient bid or the lowest sufficient bid in the same denomination may have been conventional, and LHO does not accept the insufficient bid:

- ♣ Offender may make any sufficient bid, and partner will be barred from the auction.
- ♣ Offender may pass, and partner will be barred from the auction.
- ♣ Offender may not substitute a double or redouble.
- ♣ If the opponents win the contract, there will be lead penalties.

We will all make an insufficient bid at some point in our bridge careers. What should you do in those cases where your action will bar partner from the bidding? These are my thoughts.

- ♣ If I think the partnership has the values for game, I bid the game contract I think most likely.
- ♣ If I was hoping the partnership might have a slam, I take a chance and bid it. It's better to be a lion than a lamb.
- ♣ If a pass seems my best correction, I consider the lead penalties first. Sometimes, it's better to overbid than incur that penalty. It may be the one way the opponents can make their contract.

· Is this the hand you pictured? ♠xxxx ♥Axx ♦x ♣AKQJT