

They Revoked!

Revoke – *Failure to follow suit, if possible, or failure to lead or play, when able, a card or suit required by law, constitutes a revoke.* (Paraphrased from Laws of Duplicate Bridge (2008), p. 74.)

We all do it sooner or later. Thinking ahead, stewing over our previous play, or simply asleep at the switch, we fail to follow suit – we revoke. This irregularity *may* result in a penalty for your side. Here are some considerations.

The Revoke is Not Established

You didn't follow suit to the spade lead, but your wonderful partner immediately inquired, "No spades, partner?" To your horror, you see a lowly spade spot card in your hand. "Oh, I have a spade," you reply. *If your opponent does not call the director, you should do so.*

A revoke must be corrected, if discovered before it has been established (see below). The offender must substitute a card of the correct suit. If a defender committed the revoke, the revoke card becomes a *major penalty card*. Do you remember that lesson? If declarer revoked, that revoke card can be replaced without further rectification. (In the new laws, the word *penalty* is reserved for penalty cards and those penalties a director might impose to maintain order and discipline. The term *rectification* is used to stress the fact that the laws are designed to restore equity, not to punish.)

A second situation exists in which a revoke must be corrected. If the revoke, established or not, occurs on trick twelve, it must be corrected, if discovered before all four hands have been replaced.

The Revoke Is Established

A revoke does not become *established* until the offender or his partner leads or plays to the next trick; designates a card to be played to the next trick; or makes a claim or concession. *Once a revoke is established, it cannot be corrected, except on the twelfth trick.* If you become aware of your revoke after it has been established, it's usually not a good idea to tell the opponents.

What do you do when you discover that an opponent has revoked? You call the director, of course.

- ♣ If you're a defender, it's usually best to wait until the end of the hand. Although not imperative, you avoid any risk of giving your partner unauthorized information.
- ♣ If you're the declarer, it's usually best to wait until the end of the hand. You don't want to give the defenders any help in figuring out your hand.
- ♣ **If you're the dummy, you must wait until the hand is over before calling the director!**

In all cases, if you know, or suspect, that an opponent has revoked, tell everyone at the table to leave their cards as played and call the director immediately. *No one should return their hand to the board!* The director will rectify the situation after play of the hand is complete.

- ♣ If the offending *player* won the revoke trick, and the offending *side* won at least one additional trick, two tricks are transferred to the non-offending side. Dummy and declarer are considered separate players in this situation.
- ♣ If the offending *player* did not win the revoke trick, and the offending *side* won that trick, or any subsequent trick, one trick is transferred to the non-offending side. Again, dummy and declarer are considered separate players in this situation.
- ♣ There is no rectification following an established revoke in these instances:
 - The offenders did not win the revoke trick or any subsequent trick.
 - It is the second revoke in the same suit by the same player.
 - If the revoke occurred through failure to play a faced card, including a card from dummy's hand.
 - If attention was drawn to the revoke after the non-offending side made a call on the next hand, or if attention was drawn to the revoke after the end of the round.
 - If both sides revoked on the same board.
 - If the revoke occurred on trick twelve.

"But the one or two tricks are not enough!" you say. "If he had followed suit, I would have taken six spades, one heart, and two diamonds to make my contract. Instead, I thought spades broke badly, followed my second line of play, and went down three tricks! This isn't fair!" Relax. The director is always responsible for restoring equity. She will adjust your score to what would have happened if no irregularity had occurred.

In the United States, the following players are allowed to inquire about a possible revoke. Note that dummy may not ask a defender.

- ♣ Declarer may ask a defender.
- ♣ Dummy may ask declarer - as long as dummy has done nothing to forfeit this right.
- ♣ Defenders may ask declarer.
- ♣ Defenders may ask one another - at the risk of creating unauthorized information.

What do you do if you catch your revoke before it's established? **Call the director.** What do you do if you know, or suspect, that an opponent has revoked, and it's too late to correct the revoke? **Call the director immediately after the play of the hand is concluded.**

Final tip - If you trump partner's spade lead at trick two, *don't return a spade to partner.* Someone is sure to notice your revoke. 😊