

## Revokes: What Happens? Is it Fair?

DAVID STEVENSON answers your question. - Original - [Here](#)

'You reneged!' 'No, I didn't!' 'Yes, you did!' 'I am afraid you did, partner.' 'Well, I didn't mean to.' 'That's two tricks to us!' 'No, it isn't, it's one trick.' 'Well, anyway, it made no difference, it isn't fair.'

Does any of this sound familiar? In my fifty-plus years of playing bridge, I have heard these sort of things many times and many such arguments have been made. So let us consider what should really happen.

Let us look at the basics. First, 'reneege' is a very old term. The modern term is 'revoke'; it changed in about 1940 but the old term is still occasionally used. Second, never argue with your opponents in a duplicate: just call the director and let him sort it out. It can be more difficult in rubber bridge, or in a match played privately: then the players will have to sort it out.

**Following suit** is the most basic rule in the game and players who fail to follow suit spoil the hand for other players. As a result, it was decided that there would be some sort of automatic penalties for players who revoke to persuade them to take more care. However, it was also realised that they should never gain, so if they have gained any tricks because of the revoke, these should be given back and the Laws allow for that. So, if a player revokes and it is established, then there is a combination of penalty and redress that can lead to none, one, two or more tricks being transferred.

If a **revoke is discovered in time** it can be corrected and in time means before it is established: but when is it established? Normally, it is established when the revoker or his partner plays to the next trick; though the revoking side claiming, conceding or agreeing to a claim will also establish it.

If the **revoke is not established**, then it must be corrected by changing it for a legal card. If the revoker was a defender, then the revoke card becomes a major penalty card and the penalties for that apply. Any cards played after the revoke by the other side may be changed and, if they are changed, subsequent cards played by the revoking side may also be changed, again defender's changed cards becoming major penalty cards.

If the **revoke is established**, the revoke card remains played and the hand is played out. At the end of the hand, the director decides on the automatic penalty tricks. Tricks won before the revoke are safe and are never transferred. If the revoker won the revoke trick and his side won another, then two tricks are transferred. Note, it has to be the actual revoker: for example, if declarer revokes and the trick is won by dummy, then this is not a two trick revoke. If the revoker does not win the revoke trick, then only one trick is transferred, assuming he or his partner win either the revoke trick or a later trick. Also, only one trick is transferred if the revoker wins the revoke trick but that is the last trick his side wins. Finally, if the revoking side win neither the revoke trick nor any subsequent tricks, no tricks are transferred. So the automatic revoke tricks might be none, one or two.

In some cases, the revoke makes no difference and any automatic tricks are to penalise the revoker. In other cases, the revoke made a difference of one or even two tricks and the automatic tricks give those tricks back. So the automatic tricks sometimes penalise and sometimes give redress for tricks lost.

What happens if **a revoke costs more tricks**, for example, when declarer is able to run a long suit in dummy that would not run without the revoke, costing the other side, maybe, four tricks? Then the director adjusts the score to give the four tricks back. Note, he does not add any penalty tricks: he adjusts it for redress only. When your opponents revoke, you may or may not gain, but you can never lose.

Some players think it is ridiculous that you could lose your ace of trumps when defending a grand slam if you or your partner revoke. But it is a penalty and you can never lose it if you and your partner always follow suit. Perhaps safest is to lead your ace of trumps before your partner can revoke! Remember that tricks won before any revoke are safe and will never be transferred.

'**Dummy can't revoke.**' This is a wellknown but totally incorrect saying. If dummy fails to follow suit when able, then he has revoked. However, automatic revoke tricks are not transferred, but redress may be given

'There is no such thing as a **revoke at trick twelve.**' Again, this is an incorrect saying, since if someone does not follow suit at trick twelve then he has revoked. But the rules dealing with it are different: after a trick twelve revoke, the last two tricks are replayed without the revoke, though an adjustment will be given if a defender has gained from seeing his partner's revoke card.

Finally, let me return to the argument that **it is not fair**. Sadly, in the modern era, players often think that they should not suffer even when they do something wrong. But bridge is a much better game if the rules are followed and the rule about following suit is so important that the law makers feel some sort of real penalty is a good idea. It also means that life is much easier for directors: rarely do they worry about redress for revokes because the automatic penalties usually cover redress as well as penalise.