

A card prematurely exposed (but not led, see [Law 57](#)) by a defender is a penalty card unless the Director designates otherwise (see [Law 49](#) and [Law 23](#) may apply).

A. Penalty Card Remains Exposed

A penalty card must be left face up on the table immediately before the player to whom it belongs, until a rectification has been selected.

B. Major or Minor Penalty Card?

A single card below the rank of an honour exposed unintentionally (as in playing two cards to a trick, or in dropping a card accidentally) becomes a minor penalty card. Any card of honour rank, or any card exposed through deliberate play (for example in leading out of turn, or in revoking and then correcting), becomes a major penalty card; when one defender has two or more penalty cards, all such cards become major penalty cards.

C. Disposition of Minor Penalty Card

When a defender has a minor penalty card, he may not play any other card of the same suit below the rank of an honour until he has first played the penalty card, but he is entitled to play an honour card instead. Offender's partner is not subject to lead restriction, but information gained through seeing the penalty card is unauthorized (see [E](#) following).

D. Disposition of Major Penalty Card

When a defender has a major penalty card, both the offender and his partner may be subject to restriction, the offender whenever he is to play, the partner whenever he is to lead.

1. a. A major penalty card must be played at the first legal opportunity, whether in leading, following suit, discarding or trumping. If a defender has two or more penalty cards that can legally be played, declarer designates which is to be played.
 - b. The obligation to follow suit, or to comply with a lead or play restriction, takes precedence over the obligation to play a major penalty card, but the penalty card must still be left face up on the table and played at the next legal opportunity.
2. When a defender has the lead while his partner has a major penalty card, he may not lead until declarer has stated which of the options below is selected (if the defender leads prematurely, he is subject to rectification under [Law 49](#)). Declarer may choose:
 - a. to require* the defender to lead the suit of the penalty card, or to prohibit* him from leading that suit for as long as he retains the lead (for two or more penalty cards, see [Law 51](#)); if declarer exercises either of these options, the card is no longer a penalty card and is picked up.
 - b. not to require or prohibit a lead, in which case the defender may lead any card; the penalty card remains a penalty card**. If this option is selected [Law 50D](#) continues to apply for as long as the penalty card remains.

E. Information from a Penalty Card

1. Knowledge of the requirements for playing a penalty card is authorized information for all players.
2. Other information derived from sight of a penalty card is unauthorized for the partner of the player who has the penalty card (but authorized for declarer).
3. If the Director judges that the exposed card conveyed such information as to damage the non-offending side he shall award an adjusted score.

* If the player is unable to lead as required see [Law 59](#).

**If the partner of the defender with the penalty card retains the lead, and the penalty card has not yet been played, then all the requirements and options of [Law 50D2](#) apply again at the following trick.