

Deviating from Partnership Agreements

Frequently a player is faced with an unusual hand that requires “creativity” in bidding. No bid from the partnership system addresses the peculiarities of the hand before him. Some select “the least lie” to describe the hand they hold, others hope for the best and make a bid they know violates their partnership agreement. Their hope is to perhaps find out further information on partner’s holding before making their next call.

From Law 40:

c. Deviation from System and Psychic Action

1. A player may deviate from his side’s announced understandings always, provided that his partner has no more reason to be aware of the deviation than have the opponents. Repeated deviations lead to implicit understandings, which then form part of the partnership’s methods and must be disclosed in accordance with the regulations governing disclosure of system. If the director judges there is undisclosed knowledge that has damaged the opponents, he shall adjust the score and may award a procedural penalty.

2. Other than the above, no player has any obligation to disclose to the opponents that he has deviated from his announced methods.

Duplicate Decisions expands upon this:

Partnership Understandings – General Guidelines: Players agreements, whether implicit or explicit, must be available to your opponents. However, a player may make any call or any play (including an intentionally misleading one that departs from commonly accepted or previously announced conventional practice) without prior announcement, provided it is not based on a partnership understanding. In other words, a player may make any bid that will fool partner and his opponents equally.