



Defective Trick by Bob Gruber

Law #

A defective trick doesn't arise too often. When one does, unraveling the consequences can present a challenge to the director. In any case, a trick may be defective in one of two ways, namely:

- 1) A player has omitted to play to a trick, or
- 2) A player has played too many cards to a trick.

For a defective trick, recovery/rectification depends upon when the defective trick was discovered. For purposes of Law 67—which governs defective tricks—there are two possibilities:

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- 1) Before both sides play to the next trick, or
- 2) After both sides have played to the next trick.

Regardless of when the defective trick is discovered, the director should be summoned immediately to determine recovery/rectification. After you call the director, don't forget to leave a hand up to help guide the director to your table, the table needing assistance.

Before Both Sides Play to the Next Trick

If the defective trick is discovered before both sides play to the next trick, the error must be rectified. If the irregularity was failure to play a card, the offender supplies a card he can legally play and play continues normally, without penalty for the tardiness of playing the card.

67A1

If the irregularity was too many cards played to a trick, either of two laws apply:

Law 45E—Fifth Card Played to Trick, or

45E

Law 58B—Simultaneous Cards from One Hand.

58B

Under Law 45E, there's a difference between a defender or declarer playing a 5th card to a trick.

1. A 5th card contributed to a trick by a defender becomes a penalty card, subject to Law 50, unless the Director deems that it was led, in which case, either Law 53 or Law 54D applies.

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54D

Law 53 is: Lead Out of Turn Accepted (therefore, no penalty).

Law 54D is: Declarer Refuses Lead, which invokes Law 50D (Disposition of a Major Penalty Card).

50D

Most often, a defender's 5th card becomes a major penalty card.

2. When declarer contributes a 5th card to a trick from his own hand or dummy, it is returned to the hand without further rectification unless the Director deems that it was led, in which case, Law 55—Declarer's Lead out of Turn—applies. Under Law 55, either defender may accept the lead or require it to be retracted. If retracted, a lead from the correct hand is made without further rectification. (If the defenders disagree, the choice of the defender to the left of the card led prevails.)

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Under Law 58B, if a player leads or plays 2 or more cards simultaneously:

1. If only 1 card is visible, that card is played; all other cards are picked up—without being exposed—and there is no further rectification (see Law 47F).

47F



2. If more than 1 card is visible, the player designates the card he proposes to play. When he is a defender, each other exposed card becomes a penalty card (see Law 50). 50
Declarer's exposed cards are returned to hand without penalty.
3. After a player withdraws a visible card, an opponent who subsequently played to that card [trick] may withdraw his play and substitute another without further rectification (but see Law 16D on authorized and unauthorized information). 16D

After Both Sides Have Played to the Next Trick

After both sides have played to the next trick(s), the Director's first task is to establish which trick was defective, usually by working backward through the played tricks¹. Once the defective trick is determined, the Director next rectifies the number of cards as follows:

1. The offender didn't play a card.
 - a. The offender is required to expose a card for all at the table to see (including dummy), following suit if possible; otherwise he plays any card. The offender then places the exposed card face down in the appropriate spot in his played cards.
 - b. Ownership of the defective trick is not affected. That is, neither playing the highest card in the suit led, nor playing a trump will change which side won the trick. It follows that the leader to the next trick is also not affected.
 - c. The offender is deemed to have revoked on the defective trick and is subject to the 1 trick transfer provision of Law 64A2. 64A2
2. The offender played more than 1 card.
 - a. The Director inspects the offender's played cards with the intent of restoring all extra cards to the offender's hand, leaving among the played cards the one faced in playing to the defective trick. (The Director should avoid exposing a defender's extra played cards, because if any extra cards normally to be restored to a defender's hand become exposed, they, instead, become penalty cards subject to Law 50.) If the Director is unable to determine which card was faced, the offender leaves the highest ranking of the cards that he could have legally played to the trick and restores the remaining extra cards to his hand. 50
 - b. Ownership of the defective trick does not change.
 - c. Any card restored to the offender's hand is deemed to have been continuously in the offender's hand and failure to have played it to an earlier trick may constitute a revoke. 61

When a defective trick is discovered, the Director should be summoned immediately to establish which trick was defective and to determine recovery/rectification. If the defective trick occurred several tricks earlier, the director will need the cooperation of all players to establish which trick was defective. Only then can recovery/rectification be determined.

¹ If it's not possible to determine the defective trick because the players didn't maintain their played cards in order, the Director must assess blame. The offending side—the one where a player has too many or too few cards—will often be given an average minus. Whether the non-offenders receive an average plus, average or even an average minus will probably depend on how they maintained their played cards. Alternatively, the Director may opt to impose procedural penalties.