

Many people have asked me why I "bid so high" when playing Texas 42. My father taught me the game about 1950 when I was about 11. He was born in 1890 and learned the game at an early age. His education came from a one-room schoolhouse in McDonald NM, just north of Lovington, yet he had a knack for mathematics and how to estimate odds that he applied to playing and bidding in 42.

I honed my game by playing with our family. I had five older brothers, with the one next to me being 12 years older than me. Our family never played "nello" or any of the games that were not straight 42. They did not even play doubles as trumps or follow me: just straight 42 with a suit as trumps. The bidding was very aggressive with no worry that someone was able to change the rules to fit a low hand. We learned to bid with low hands. This discussion assumes that the reader is basically familiar with the game. I must also assume that you know how to evaluate a hand as to the risks associated with what bid to make. However, I have discovered that many "experienced" 42 players may not know how to evaluate a hand under this "aggressive" bidding system. Some hand evaluation is provided here for "high probability" hands. But "normal" hand evaluation is a very complex subject that can really only be learned by personal inter-action and experience.

Absolute Basics: Where did the name "42" come from? "42" gets its name from the number of points that are in one hand. Each trick is one point for seven points total in a hand. There are five "game" dominoes whose ends add up to five or ten: six-four, double five, five-blank, four-ace, and deuce-trey. These game points add up to 35, and when you add the seven points for tricks, you get "42". By the way, my father told me that the game was derived from a card game named "pitch" where there are points for tricks; and certain cards count as "game" points. Many "42" terms relate back to card games: like tricks, trumps, game, ace, deuce, Trey, etc.

Common Terms: The term "slough" is commonly used when a player cannot follow the suit that was led, and can thus play any domino from their hand.

In this discussion, "Bidder" is the person who gets the bid, "Partner" is the bidder's partner, "Left-side opponent" is the person playing behind the bidder, and "Right-side opponent" is the person playing in front of the bidder.

Bidding Basics and Odds: I am assuming that you are familiar with bidding, but I have found that many players do not know the relationship between the bid and the odds of making a certain bid. This is evidenced when a player makes a bid of "32", as if that is a competitive bid, when "31" is still open. Pardon me for being blunt, but hopefully you will come to understand how ineffective the "32" bid is! "32" should only be used when the bidder is making the last bid, and is raising 31! Why? Let's look at the odds of making certain bids.

Bidding Break Points: The bidding range is "30" minimum, to "42" maximum for one point. When the bidding is at the one mark level, a bid may be entered for two marks, and succeeding bids can raise the earlier bid by one mark. The multiple mark hands will be called "84" hands.

The first breakpoint is "31": a player can lose ten in count on one trick and still make the bid.

If a player bids over "31", the loss of ten in count will set them. Many players will not bid over 31 if they have an "off" that is "exposed" to losing a ten count (four, five, or six "off"). In a power bidding game, they will not get the bid very often on hands that are often makeable at "34" or higher. Skill can be developed in learning how to depend on their partner, and how to play a hand to minimize the odds of losing the hand.

The next breakpoint is "36": a player can lose one five count on one trick and still make the bid.

If a player bids over "36", one trick with a five count will set them. "36" is a very strong bid where the bidder is usually only exposed to losing one trick with a nickel in the off's suit.

Power Bidders only use the following bids (unless they are using a "bidding convention"-bids that tell everyone something about the bidder's hand): they only bid 31, 34, 35, 36, 41 and very rarely, 42: or multiple points like 84 or higher. If you will eliminate 30, 32, and 33 from your bidding, you will find you will get the bid & make it more often and force your opponent to a higher bid that is more difficult to make than the bid you made. The reasons are explained in the rest of this document.

Bidding Odds and Forcing the Opponent to Higher Risk Bids: I will not address specific mathematical odds in this discussion since I do not have the expertise to determine them. However, we will examine odds in a logical manner with my estimates on certain situations from years of experience. Another factor comes into play: when I make a certain bid: I want to force the opponent to take on significantly greater risk of success by over-bidding me. I cannot stress how important it is for you to embrace this concept. Turn your attention to the following table. The term “high risk” means that you have one or more “offs” exposed to that threat.

Texas 42 Power Bidding Table

Bid	Can Lose & Make Bid			Comments (More Explanation of Bids is Below)
	Pts	Tricks	Count	
30	12	2	10	Only as last or next to last bidder: high risk of losing 6-4 or double 5
31	11	1	10	High risk of losing 6-4 or double-5: pushes opponent to higher risk. May be a “high probability” hand
32	10	5	5	Only bid if you are last bidder to raise 31
33	9	4	5	Only bid if you are last bidder to raise 32
34	8	3	5	Jump here to raise a “31” bid or start the bidding. Leaves room for partner to bid 36 if person behind you bids 35
35	7	2	5	Stronger hand than 34, particularly if partner has already bid. Jump here to raise a “31” bid or start the bidding. If you are exposed to probably losing 2 tricks, you should just as well bid 35 unless you want to leave room for an overbid of 34 so your partner can bid 36
36	6	1	5	Raise a 35 bid or an opening bid for a “high probability” hand
37	5	5	0	Never bid this unless you are last bidder and are raising opponents bid
38	4	4	0	Never bid this unless you are last bidder and are raising opponents bid
39	3	3	0	Never bid this unless you are last bidder and are raising opponents bid
40	2	2	0	Never bid this unless you are last bidder and are raising opponents bid
41	1	1	0	Jump here when an opponent bids 36-maybe even bid 40 if have 2 offs Or have 84 hand when you game score is 6: leaves leeway to lose one trick
42	0	0	0	Only when opponent has bid 41 in front of you

Table Explanation: The above table shows the combination of tricks and game that can be lost and the bid still be made. Comments refer to the bidder’s hand make up or when the bid is used. The bids used in Power Bidding are in **bold**. For example: a “31” bid can lose eleven points and still make the bid. The bidder can lose one trick along with one ten-count domino or two five-count dominos.

“High Probability” hands are discussed later.

Bid Analysis / Usage:

“30” is used rarely and only if the bidder has the last or next to last bid.

You must be expecting to play the hand unless you are using 30 as an indicator bid of your hand for your partner who has not yet bid. More on “signal” bids later.

“31” is a very common bid when there is a high risk of losing a ten count.

It makes a following bidder take on the risk of losing a ten count and immediately losing the hand.

However, if you are in a game of competitive bidding, you may want to move on up to “34”, and play your hand in a way to minimize the chances of losing the ten count. If you never bid above 31 with exposure to a ten count off, you will miss many points you could have made, and will not get the bid very often in a power bidding game. If you are in a less competitive bidding environment, you might stay with 31.

“32” What do you think the odds are of losing only one five-count in five tricks-and thus make 32? They are astronomical! That means you caught the two ten counts and two of the five counts (making 32) in just two tricks: four of the eight dominoes in those two tricks are counters! You will see this happen occasionally if someone catches all the count in fours and fives by leading those two doubles and catching the double-five, six-four, blank-five, and four-ace in those two tricks.

When someone makes a 32 bid, take a look at the end of the hand. You will find they actually made 34 or higher the vast majority of the time. The “32” bidder has taken on the risk of losing a ten in count without putting any pressure on an opponent bidding after them! You will actually make 33 or 34 about 98% of the time that you would have made a 32 bid.

“33” I have seen hands where a bidder made exactly 33 by losing four tricks with just one nickel.

But, you are not forcing an opponent to a significantly higher risk by over-bidding you.

“34” Three tricks and one nickel in count can be lost and still make the bid.

People comment, “But a ten count will set you.” A ten count will also set “32” or “33”.

The important thing to remember is the additional risk an opponent has to take to over-bid me. The risk of going from 34 to 35 is probably about 20% higher. The risk from going from 35 to 36 is probably 50-60% higher. On the other hand, the risk from going from “32” or “33” to “34” is negligible. That’s the reason 32 and 33 are very ineffective bids when someone is bidding behind you.

“34” Hand Composition:

A fair hand, or a not-so-good hand: if I have a good hand, I will bid 35 or 36.

I have a 31 bid, but someone has already bid 31 and I need to be the bidder of the hand.

I have a “too weak to pass” hand. Remember that our family never played nello.

If we drew a very weak hand, but had some trumps in the low suits, we bid that hand, perhaps with 3 offs.

Many people get great satisfaction from drawing a lay-down “84” hand. I draw my greatest satisfaction from being able to make a weak hand with a playing strategy based on odds and my partner’s help.

Some might feel that I am taking undue risk of losing the point. But, if you have a weak hand, the opponents may have strong hands and would win the point anyway. By bidding 34 or higher on these weak hands, you may push them to a point where they cannot make their hand.

“35” is when you have a high probability of making exactly 35: will lose 2 tricks, but probably only one nickel. It forces the opponent to the high-risk “36” or “84”. You may also have a “too weak to pass” hand.

I also bid it with competitive bidders-with two offs if one of them is not exposed to a ten count loss.

“36” is usually considered a very high risk bid since the bidder can only lose a five count and one trick.

But, in the “high probability hand” section, you will see that there are hands where you have a 90% or higher probability of making “36”, and you must bid “36” no matter what the preceding bid is. In that section, you will also see why one who knows the odds will never bid 84 with a “Straight Off”, but will bid 36 instead.

“40 or 41” is the raise when someone has bid 36 or higher in front of you and you have a high probability hand that you are expecting to only lose one or two tricks, or a not-so-good hand I describe later as “too weak to pass”. You cannot lose any count when the bid is over 36, so bid 41 to force an over-bidder into a situation where they cannot lose one trick. It is always used when you have a “true” 84 hand but only need one point to win the game: leave yourself some leeway to lose that last trick: not only will the opponents have to catch the trick, they must also catch a counter with it...

It is extremely important that you do not bid 84 when you have six points-unless your opponent also has six points and you want to have the tricks covered during play. If you do bid 84 when you have six points and the opponent has less, and the opponent sets you or over-bids and makes their bid, you just gave away a point!

High Probability Hands are those hands that you have a high probability of making

Lay-Down 84: Why do you bid “84” or higher with a “lay-down”? Because there is 100% chance of success if it is a true lay-down. (Of course, you should only bid 84 if you need more than one point or have to raise another 84.) Bidding 84 with a lay-down is obvious to everyone.

You need to realize that there are some hands other than lay-downs that have very high odds of success at certain bid levels. When you draw such a hand, **you must make the appropriate bid with no regards to the prior lower bidding.**

Let’s examine those situations.

High Probability 84: Double in Front of Off: This is a very good hand. Let’s assume solid trumps:

A six-four off with a leading double six; or a five-four off with the double five are great situations with about an 85% or higher success rate. All you have to do is draw the next highest domino of the suit (the “cow”) when you play the double to the off.

Other offs, particularly like the ace-blank following the double ace have lower success rates since you have to draw most or all of the outstanding other dominoes in the off’s suit with your double.

If you only need one point to win the game, consider bidding 36. Instead of waiting till the end to play the double in front of the off, you might consider pulling trumps and under-leading the off away from the double as a safety play to make 36. Of course, this depends on whether the six-four is not a trump and your off is a six or a four. In that case, you play the double and off as the last two tricks.

84: Lacking Second High Trump: The success depends on how many trumps you have.

With five trumps, the success rate is about 90%.

With four, it ranges between about 75-85%, depending on whether you are missing the two trumps under the double.

With three, the success rate probably drops to about 60%.

Two without the two highest trumps? When did you get out of the mental hospital?

If you are weak in trumps and also have a double in front of an off, the success rate is probably about 50%.

84: Without Highest Trump or With One or More Straight Offs:

This is NOT a high probability 84 hand: it may be a high probability “36” hand, covered later

I only bid 84 on these hands when I am way behind in the game—at least 4-5 points. Or, they have six points. A later discussion of mathematical odds will hopefully convince you to **never bid 84 again with a straight off** unless you are way behind in the game score!

High Probability 31: Straight Single Off that may lose a Ten-Count Only: Success rate is about 90%

You have a great hand, with the double to your trumps, but have one four, five or six straight off that, if lost, will normally lose a maximum of one ten count.

Specific Hands:

Trumps are sixes or fours: If you have a five off, this is not a high probability hand.

If you don’t have a five off, you need to be bidding 34 or higher.

Trumps are fives, treys or deuces: You have a six off, maybe even the six-four.

If trumps are fives and you have the blank-five and the two trumps next to the double, but not the double five: and the rest of the hand is solid, you will make 31 about 60% of the time. It is best to only have 4 trumps in this situation.

Trumps are aces: You have a four or six off (the four-ace is trump).

Trumps are blanks: You have a four, five, or six off, maybe even the six-four (the five-blank is trump).

If you have a single off that is not exposed to losing a ten count as in the situations described above, you have a high probability 36 hand.

Play of the hand: As soon as trumps are pulled, lead the off. Don’t wait.

If you wait, particularly until the end of the hand, your chances of going set increase dramatically. You need to understand how high your chances are of making such a bid, because we will use the same logic in understanding the high probability “36” bid.

Bidding: Jump into the 31 slot if it is open: Do not bid 30!

If 31 is already taken, consider jumping to 34 or higher, particularly if you have trumps in a low suit and cannot play any defense.

Do not consider 84 unless you are a long ways behind. This will be explained later.

High Probability 36: Straight Single Off that may lose a Five-Count Only: Success Rate is 90% or higher

You have a great hand, with the double to your solid trumps, but have one straight off. Many people bid 84 on these hands. The heart of this discussion is to convince you how much the odds are against you; and what the mathematical point differential is between how many points you will make on those hands versus what someone bidding 36 will make on the same hands over a large number of hands-its called “odds” or “statistics”. If I bid 36 without having to overbid 35, I call this a “free” 36 bid. It tells everyone that I have a very good hand with the exception of a “straight off”-no double to that off.

A High Probability 36 Hand’s single off is one that will lose a maximum of one five count.

This is probably the hardest bid to encourage a person new to power bidding to make. You must bid “36” immediately due to the very high probability of making this hand. Do not bid lower and allow your opponent to over-bid you without taking on the much higher risk of not being able to lose any count on a trick. I call these specific hands “**High Probability 36 hands**”. Learn to identify them and bid 36 with no fear!

Note: If you over-bid a prior 35 bid; no one, including your partner, will know if you have a high probability 36 hand or are having to over-bid, perhaps with a weaker hand.

Hand composition: these are great hands with a “straight off” on which many people bid “84”.

Or, they may be lay-downs without the highest trump (other than fives).

The suit of the off only has exposure to a five count loss at most. The off may actually be the four-ace or deuce-trey.

Specific Hands:

Trumps are sixes: Straight off is an ace, deuce, trey, or four.

If the off is the trey-deuce or four-ace, the success rate is about 90%.

If the off is not the trey-deuce or four-ace, the success rate is about 95%.

Trumps are fives: Straight off is an ace, deuce, or trey.

If the off is the trey-deuce, the success rate is about 90%.

If the off is an ace, deuce, or trey other than the trey-deuce, the success rate is about 95%.

Trumps are fours: Straight off is an ace, deuce, trey, or six.

If the off is the trey-deuce, the success rate is about 90%.

If the off is a deuce, or trey other than the trey-deuce, the success rate is about 95%.

If the off is a one or six, the success rate is about 98%.

“Lay-Down 36”: Is there such a thing? Yes-although you need to play it out.

Fours are trumps, you also have the double five and your off is an ace or six.

100% success rate unless your partner is exceedingly stupid: I’ll let you figure it out...

Trumps are threes: Straight off is an ace or deuce.

If the off is a deuce, the success rate is about 98%.

If the off is an ace, the success rate is about 95%.

Trumps are twos: Straight off is an ace or trey.

If the off is a trey, the success rate is about 98%.

If the off is an ace, the success rate is about 95%.

Trumps are aces: Straight off is a deuce or trey.

If the off is the trey-deuce, the success rate is about 90%.

If the off is not the trey-deuce, the success rate is about 95%.

Trumps are blanks: Straight off is an ace, deuce, or trey.

If the off is the trey-deuce or four-ace, the success rate is about 90%.

If the off is not the trey-deuce or four-ace, the success rate is about 95%.

Playing the Hand: The concept is to pull trumps and immediately lead the off before the opponents can get void in your off’s suit. To go set, one opponent has to catch the trick and you have to lose ten in count on that one trick. Just like a lay-down and most other “84” hands, there is no real playing skill involved-do it the same way every time.

That means the opponent who doesn’t catch the trick has to be void in the off’s suit and the partner must slough enough count on the trick to set you. A sloughed ten count will set you. If the sloughing opponent plays a five count, and your partner has to play the off suit’s five count, you are also set and very unlucky!

The odds are two out of three that an opponent will have the double to the off and catch the trick. But the odds that the other opponent will also be void in your off's suit on the second or third trick of the hand; and slough enough count to set you are extremely unlikely.

There are factors in the order of play that if the person on your right has the double to the off, the person on your left must be void in your off's suit and slough count without knowing if their partner can catch the trick. Many people are averse to doing this, but it is the only way to defend the hand.

Don't come complaining to me if you wait till the last trick to play your off and go set!

The different success level parameters are:

98%: Your off does not have exposure to losing a five count. The opponent that is sloughing game must have a ten count and slough it.

Trumps are fours and the off is the ace-blank or a six.

Trumps are deuces or treys, and the off is correspondingly a trey or deuce.

95%: Your off has exposure to losing a five count, but the off is not the trey-deuce or four-ace.

Trumps are sixes and the off is a four, trey, deuce, or ace.

Trumps are fives, fours, aces, or blanks and the off is a trey or deuce.

To set you: One opponent catches the trick, the other opponent is void and:

Plays a ten count, or

Plays a nickel that is not in the off's suit and your partner has to play the nickel in the off's suit.

90%: Your off is a five count that does not have exposure to losing a ten count of the same suit.

Trumps are sixes and the off is the four-ace or trey-deuce (the only time the four-ace can be the off).

Trumps are fives, fours, aces, or blanks and the off is the trey-deuce.

Playing the High Probability 36 Hand:

Straight Off: Pull trumps: lead the off immediately after the trumps are in, even if it just takes one lead to pull trumps. The idea is to lead the off before an opponent has the time to get void in the suit and slough a counter on it that will set you. If you leave the off to the end, your chances of going set rise dramatically!

Lacking Highest Trump: Lead trumps and hope that an opponent doesn't slough a ten count on the first lead: **Success rate is about 75%**, depending on how many trumps you have: 3-4 trumps is better than 5-6.

Partner Support of the High Probability 36 Hand:

As strange as it seems, the most important dominoes for a partner to have in support of a High Probability 36 hand are doubles other than the blank and five; or the four-ace and/or the deuce-trey.

Doubles: Conditions when a specific double may catch the bidders off, so hold these. Defense needs to take notice!

Double to the trump, obviously.

Non-trump Doubles ace, deuce, trey, six are always possibilities.

Double four if sixes are trumps.

Double five is useless: bidder does not have five off.

Double blank can't catch anything.

Count: The two key count dominoes to support a high probability 42 hand are the four-ace and the deuce-trey, not the ten counts or the five-blank! If you, as the partner of the bidder, have the opportunity to slough on the first tricks that are pulling trumps, slough using these rules:

You have the four-ace or deuce-trey, slough it.

You have both:

If both ends of both are backed up, slough the trey-deuce first.

If the trey-deuce is covered on both ends, slough the four-ace.

If the four-ace is covered on both ends slough the trey-deuce.

This minimizes the chances of you having to play a five count on your partner's off. Then, the only way the hand can be set is if the sloughing opponent has a ten count.

Why not bid 84 on these high probability "36" hands? The odds will **kill you** in the long run!

If you bid 84 and have a straight off, what are the odds that your partner has that double?

Well, there are two opponents and one partner, so the chances of my partner having it are one in two.

Right? Wrong! It's one chance in three or about 33%. That means in the long term, you will make an 84 hand with a straight off about one out of three times. That's two points made in one out of three hands. If you raise an 84 bid to 3 marks, it is 3 points made in one of three hands, etc.

The odds of making a high probability “36” hand have been presented. Let’s compare the Odds of a high probability 36 bid hand versus bidding 84 with a straight off

We will compare the odds by calculating the points gained over a large number of 30-hand sets. I will use my lowest 90% estimate success rate for the high probability 36.

Let’s use a table to show the effects of making use of the odds over thirty such hands:

Points We Score Bidding 36 as Opponent Bid 84 on 30 Hands Each

Thirty Hands Each	Odds	X 30 = Hands Won	X Points per Hand	= Our Total Points
We Win 90% by Bidding 36	90%	27	1	27
Opponents Lose 2/3 by Bidding 84	2/3	20	2	40
Total Points We Win				67

Points Opponents Score Bidding 84 as We Bid 36 on 30 Hands Each

Thirty Hands Each	Odds	X 30 = Hands Won	X Points per Hand	= Their Total Points
Opponents Win 1/3 by Bidding 84	1/3	10	2	20
We Lose 10% by Bidding 36	10%	3	1	3
Total Points Opponents Win				23

I was astounded when I put this table together. I had always just looked at the advantage in the number of points my team made by bidding 36 instead of 84 on these hands, and the differential of 7 points is significant: 27 points bidding 36 versus 20 bidding 84. But when the points lost are considered, the odds are staggering!

If sixty such hands are played by two teams playing each other, one bidding 84 on thirty hands and the other bidding 36 on thirty hands, the ones bidding 36 will score 67 points while the 84 bidders will score 23 points.

There is almost a **THREE TO ONE** advantage to the person bidding 36!

Do you understand why I just smile when I bid 36, hit my partner with a straight off, and someone says, “You should have bid 84!” I just smile as I win game after game. It’s the same way the casinos take your money...

In looking at the Bidder points column, it seems that it makes sense to take a chance when the bidding gets above 2 marks with a straight off, but the penalty is severe!

If you are way behind, you may want to take the risk, particularly if you have a hand in blanks, aces, or deuces that can provide no defense. But you should know what the long-term odds are.

Members of my family would often bid 84 with a five off, particularly the blank-five. The rationale was that you were set no matter what was bid if you lost the double five and blank-five on the same trick. I used to do that, but always sensed the penalties that are involved. I would either pass, or I might bid 34-36 on that hand and try to get out of the lead by under-leading the trump suit. Often, if I bid 34 or 35, an opponent will over-bid me, taking on greater risk of being set.

Then, in August 2010, I finally analyzed the odds of bidding with a straight bad off. That means the off suit is four, five or six; and the ten count is not a trump. What if I bid 35 with an off exposed to losing the ten count in that suit? And this is what I found:

What happens if I bid 35 rather than 84 on solid hands that have a very bad straight off? You have a great hand, with the double to your solid trumps, but have one straight off that is a four, five, or six-and the ten count to that suit is not a trump. When you have to lead that off, you may lose a ten count on the trick. The worst possible off is the blank-5. Losing it and the double 5 sets any bid. I first put this original document together about 2005. I have learned a tremendous amount about 42 in putting it together and analyzing my play constantly for ways it can be improved. In August 2010, a new player came into the group at the Farmers Branch Senior Center who consistently bid 84 with a straight five off, particularly when she had the blank-five. I finally did the following analysis on bidding 35 with the blank-five as a straight off. Again, the chances of your partner having the double five are one in three.

Points you will score if you have a straight five off:

Result of 30 Hands Each Case	Odds	X 30 Hands =	X Points per Hand=	Total Points
You win 1/3 of your 36 hands	1 in 3	10	1	10

You win 2/3 of your opponents 84 bids	2 in 3	20	2	40
Your Total Points				50

Points the opponents will score if they have a straight five off:

Result of 30 Hands Each Case	Odds	X 30 Hands =	X Points per Hand=	Total Points
They win 2/3 of your 36 hands	2 in 3	20	1	20
They win 1/3 of their 84 bids	1 in 3	10	2	20
Opponent's Total Points				40

Only ten points difference? But that is 25% more: would you pay 25% more for something?

And, if the off is a four or a six, and you have the double to the other end of the six-four, your odds improve.

And your odds improve greatly if your partner drops the six-four on a trick before you run out of trumps so you can lead that off immediately as in a High Probability 36 hand. So, if I have a four or six off, my point differential is even higher.

I first considered bidding 36 on this hand-just like a high probability 36 hand. But my partner may have a high probability 36 that has a better chance of success than mine. So, I now bid 35 on these hands, and maybe 36 if "35" has already been bid. The opponents will not know what type of hand I have, and will often stretch their bid to overbid what they think is my "very good hand".

Consideration must be made to not bid on the hand if it is a good helping/defensive hand.

Playing Ethics and Bidding Conventions: This can be a very touchy subject since many people may feel that certain actions are ethical that really are not. Basically, there is a difference in what you bid or play and how you bid or play. And, technically, you should not say anything once the dominos have been shuffled until the end of the point except to give your bid in the same tone and emphasis as all your other bids throughout the game. This is called "talking across the board".

There are some tournaments that have very strict rules to prevent cheating. Many of these rules are similar to tournament bridge rules.

No "talking across the board"

Nothing can be said during the point other than vocalizing the bids in the same voice as all other bids. Any type of signaling by hand or body movements is subject to dismissal from the tournament, and often, being banned from other tournaments.

Dominos have to be turned up from the shuffle in a specific manner like three toward the center of the table and four toward you, and they cannot be re-arranged or touched after they are set up.

No one can do anything to draw attention to what the trump suit is after play has started, including asking what trumps are after they are announced by the winning bidder.

Two rules are to prevent a player from showing his partner that he has more than one of a suit, particularly when playing to his partner's opening of trumps to show he has more than one.

Within reason, the same length of time should be taken to make a play when it is that player's turn.

A player cannot reach for more than one domino to be played. If they reach for a domino, it must be played, even if it is a re-nig.

Dominos have to be played "flat" rather than pointing one end toward the center of the table to prevent an indication of what suit the player may have control of.

All plays must be made with the same demeanor and process: no slamming, etc. on certain plays.

The score is announced between each hand, and cannot be requested or referred to at any other time during a point. This is to prevent someone from cuing a partner on the score status after the bidding and/or play has started.

Many of these rules are not followed in "friendly" games, but "friendly" games can become very unfriendly when people flaunt the rules.

Bidding and Playing Conventions have to do with what is bid or played rather than how it is bid or played. These regulations are shared with Bridge.

Playing Conventions: Let's discuss this first since it is straightforward.

Many people will play a domino and very purposefully point one end toward their partner, showing that they have the high domino in the suit they point toward their partner. That is unethical in that the person is indicating what they have by how they play the domino.

Compare that with a person who plays, for example, a double six when that is not the suit that was led. If that is done early in the point, it tells my partner, and the other team, that I have the next highest six and can catch a six lead. (At times, the playing of a double in this situation may mean that the person had to discard something and maybe all they have left is doubles) Both the bidding team and the defense can use this. It is an excellent way for the defensive team to communicate, particularly on an 84 defense. It is important to note the distinction that this signal is ethical since it has to do with what was played rather than how it was played.

Sloughing the Double Five: Let's assume my partner has gotten the bid. I never slough the double five on a trick my bidding partner will win unless:

I have the next highest five, and usually have the other end backed up

Those ten points will make the bid and finish the hand

My partner is playing his last trump and I need to save the ten points

I suspect my partner is in trouble with his trumps and I want to "save" the double five

Bidding Conventions: are used by all bridge players. With multiple rounds of bids, the players make certain bids to indicate what is in their hand so the team can hopefully come to a makeable contract that is also generating the maximum return in points. Some of them are very complex. The important issue is that a team must declare the bidding convention it is using so that the opponents also know what they are communicating to their partners. In essence, there can be no "hidden" bidding conventions in a tournament.

Bidding conventions in 42 give information to your partner when the partner has not yet bid.

Free-bid "36": For example, when I make a 36 bid that is not a raise over 35, my partner should know that I have bid a "high probability 36 bid" where I do not need any help in making 36. The partner should only raise my 36 to 42 or higher if they have a high probability 84 hand.

What in the world does it mean when a person bids "30"?

If they have a strong hand, why are they bidding 30?

Someone will often bid 30, get passed out and then say, "I didn't expect to get it". Well, they must have bid it to tell their partner something, but what?

Some people are "bidding for a raise" when they have some help, but what is defined as "help"?

Some have a hand that looks good except for some really bad offs

Generally, a 30 bid is very nebulous in what it may mean

Our family used "32" to tell our partner certain things about our hand. "32" meant that we had the double five and the six-four. I no longer use that bidding convention unless playing with my family.

Hope you enjoyed the discourse. If you have any questions or comments, I would appreciate beneficial input.

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