

BLUE BOOK

HANDBOOK OF
EBU

PERMITTED UNDERSTANDINGS

Revised 2013



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EBU

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of the English Bridge Union

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1 GENERAL

1 A Introduction

Welcome to the new Blue Book. Why Blue? Well after all the years of an Orange Book and people using all sorts of different versions it seemed a good idea to have a new colour for the first time in 20 years.

The new book is briefer and significant amounts of information have been simplified or where they are not regularly accessed transferred to the White Book. The White Book is of interest to Tournament Directors and also contains information that may be of interest to some players. The Laws and Ethics Committee has taken the opportunity to discontinue the parallel Tangerine Book.

I'd like to thank the committee members and other volunteers who put much work into improving this publication and making it fit for the membership we now serve. I hope our members find it a useful service.

This book is effective from August 1st 2013.

Jeremy Dhondy

Chairman, Laws and Ethics Committee

1 B Contacts

The Laws and Ethics Committee (L&EC) hopes you find this book useful. If you have any comments or queries, please address them to the Secretary of the Committee who may be contacted as follows:

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The EBU L&EC has a webpage, with this *Blue Book*, the *White Book*, links to the Laws, telephone numbers of EBU TDs and Referees, forms for TDs, and other useful items for TDs and Appeals Committees.

There are several internet forums which deal with bridge law and regulation. They are independent of the EBU and the views expressed are not necessarily those of the EBU.

Any member of the Laws and Ethics Committee is happy to answer questions about the regulations. Details of the committee, who may be contacted via the secretary, can be found on the EBU website <http://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/committee>.

1 C Following published regulations

Players entering events are required to submit themselves to the published regulations.

2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

2 A Requirements

- 2 A 1 All partnership understandings, including implicit understandings and practices of the partnership (including those that arise by partnership experience), must be fully disclosed to opponents.
- 2 A 2 It is expected that experienced players will protect themselves in obvious misinformation cases. If such players receive an explanation which is implausible, and they are able to protect themselves by seeking further clarification without putting their side's interests at risk (e.g. by transmitting unauthorised information or alerting the opposition), failure to do so may prejudice their right to redress.

2 B Questions and Explanations: General (Law 20, Law 41B)

- 2 B 1 Except when announcements are required (see section 4), explanations must not be given unless asked for. At the end of the auction the declaring side may offer to explain the auction, particularly any non-alerted bids of whose meaning the defending side may be unaware.
- 2 B 2 Following the answer to a legitimate question, the questioner may ask a supplementary question to clarify the answer or to find out if the call has any additional or alternative meanings. The questioning must not amount to harassment.
- 2 B 3 A player should explain only the partnership understanding not how the player intends to interpret it. If the player believes that the meaning of his partner's call is affected by relevant partnership experience the answer should be along the lines of, "we have not specifically discussed it, but we have understandings in similar situations which may be relevant".
- 2 B 4 'Forcing' means a call which a partnership has agreed cannot be passed. Forcing, without qualification, means forcing from strength. If a forcing bid might be made with a weak hand, a player must qualify any explanation to make this clear.
- 2 B 5 Whilst all partnership understandings must be disclosed, they do not constitute an undertaking to the opposition. For instance, a player is quite entitled to pass a forcing bid, as long as the partnership has no understanding that this might happen.
- 2 B 6 The use of the words such as 'standard', 'normal' and 'natural' to describe the partnership understanding of a call, and especially a play of the cards, should be avoided as it is often capable of misinterpretation.
- 2 B 7 A questioner may ask for an explanation of either the entire auction or the specific calls in which he is interested. In response, the opponents should provide all (relevant) information and inferences. The use of specific questions should be avoided since there is a danger that the answer, whilst correct, might be incomplete. Unless the questioner really only wants to know something very specific, he should merely ask, "What does that call mean?"

2 C Disclosure of carding methods

- 2 C 1 If a partnership's understandings include alternative meanings for leads, signals or discards, then opponents are entitled to know the partnership practice and implicit understandings as to the circumstances in which each alternative applies. For example, the opponents are entitled to know the agreed meaning of the card played by third hand when a defender cashes a winner and there is a singleton in dummy.
- 2 C 2 Regular play with a particular partner is likely to lead to knowledge, even if only implicit, of partner's habits. In such a case, "no agreement" or "random" is unlikely to be an adequate description of the partnership understanding. Similarly, an explanation such as, "attitude or

2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

count, depending on what we think is needed” is unacceptable from an experienced partnership.

2 D *When things go wrong*

2 D 1 If a player’s hand is found to differ from the explanation his partner has given of a call, there are two possibilities (**Law 75**):

- (a) The partner has given a correct statement of the partnership understanding but the player has misbid (or even psyched). The opponents are not entitled to any redress, although the TD should be called in case the explanation provided the player with unauthorised information
- (b) The partner has given an incorrect statement of the partnership understanding. If the opponents have been damaged by this they are entitled to redress.

2 D 2 Unless a player knows that his partner’s call is not alertable (or announceable) he must alert. If the player is unsure when asked for its meaning he may refer the opponents to the system card if it is likely to be on the card. If there is no relevant partnership understanding, he must not say how he intends to interpret his partner’s call. *See also 4A6*

2 D 3 If a player makes a call and partner unexpectedly alerts, unexpectedly fails to alert, or gives an explanation which is inconsistent with the player’s original understanding of his call, there are three possibilities:

- (a) The player realises that partner’s alert or explanation is correct, and he has misbid
- (b) The player is confident that he has bid correctly and partner’s alert or explanation is wrong
- (c) The player is now unsure as to whether he or his partner is right.

2 D 4 Misbids arise in a number of different ways, such as if a player forgets his system, has failed to notice an earlier call in the auction, or pulls out the wrong bidding card by mistake and does not notice in time to correct it. If a player realises he has misbid, he must continue to alert, where necessary, and explain, if asked, his partner’s calls solely on the basis of his belief as to the actual partnership understandings.

2 D 5 If a player believes that it is possible that partner has misalerted or given a wrong explanation, he must rectify the situation at the appropriate time by calling the TD and explaining the situation. (**Law 75B**) The appropriate time is as follows:

- (a) If he becomes declarer or dummy, before the opening lead is selected; but
- (b) If he becomes a defender, at the end of the hand, not earlier.

2 D 6 If a player realises that he has given an incorrect or incomplete explanation, or has not alerted one of partner’s alertable calls (or has alerted a call which is not alertable), he must immediately call the TD to explain the situation (**Law 20F4**).

2 D 7 It is proper to use any unauthorised information which has been made available by partner to help a player to alert and explain the partnership understanding accurately, but this information must not be used to help in the bidding and play.

2 D 8 If as a result of partner’s explanation a player realises he has forgotten the partnership understanding and has therefore misbid, he must continue to call and play as if in ignorance of his mistake, until it becomes obvious from the auction or play that something is amiss. (**Law 73C**)

2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

- 2 D 9 If partner has given an incorrect or incomplete explanation, or if one of a player's alertable calls has not been alerted (or a call which is not alertable has been alerted), or if an incorrect announcement has been made, the player must not take any advantage of this unauthorised information. He must not choose any call or play suggested by his knowledge that there may be a problem with the auction, either because he realises that partner's bidding may be wrong, or because he is now unsure whether it is he or his partner who has gone wrong.
- 2 D 10 If an opponent's explanation is corrected while a player's opening lead is still face down, the player's partner has not asked any questions about the auction since the lead and dummy has not appeared, he will normally be allowed to change the lead with the TD's permission. The TD may also allow the last member of the defending side to have called to change his final call. **(Laws 47E2 and 21B1)**
- 2 E** ***Asking Questions: Unauthorised Information and the Potential to Mislead***
- 2 E 1 A player has the right to ask questions at his turn to call or play, but exercising this right may have consequences. If a player shows unusual interest in one or more calls of the auction, then this may give rise to unauthorised information. His partner must avoid taking advantage. It may be in a player's interests to defer questions until either he is about to make the opening lead or his partner's lead is face-down on the table.
- 2 E 2 A player may use only information he has received from legitimate sources, such as calls, plays, opponents' system cards, their answers to questions and their mannerisms. A player may not use information gained from his partner's explanation, uncertainty, tempo or mannerisms. **(Law 73B1)**. A player may not ask a question solely for his partner's benefit. **(Law 20G1)**.
- Players sometimes say, "I always ask whether I intend to bid or not". This is not recommended because, in practice, players do not follow this approach strictly.
- 2 E 3 When a player does wish to ask a question, it is recommended that he phrase this neutrally and ask simply for an explanation of the auction, or of a particular call. For example when asking about a 1♣ opening bid say, "What does 1♣ mean?", rather than, "Does that show clubs?"

3 SYSTEM CARDS

3 A *General*

- 3 A 1 Pairs are required to have two fully completed system cards. Both must contain the same information. At the beginning of each round they should exchange these with the opponents' system cards. The TD may impose a penalty if a pair does not have two properly completed system cards.

3 B *Types of system cards*

Note: System Card is the name used in the Laws for what was previously called Convention Card

- 3 B 1 Tournament organisers may specify which system cards are acceptable. The following are permitted in EBU events:
- (a) The tournament organiser or TD may allow the use of a simplified system card, such as the front of an EBU scorecard, if the partnership's methods are simple enough to be adequately described in this form
 - (b) The EBU 20B system card is the standard EBU card. An old style EBU20A may also be used
 - (c) The WBF system card is permitted only in EBU events held at Level 5. Other tournament organisers such as County Associations may choose to permit it in lower level events.
- 3 B 2 Computer-produced versions of system cards are permitted so long as they contain the same information in substantially the same layout and in a similar size.

3 C *Naming of partnership understandings*

- 3 C 1 The system card must give the meaning of all but the most well-known and unambiguous agreements on it rather than just naming them. If the system card does not, a TD may deem there to be misinformation resulting from the failure to give a clear and precise explanation and this may lead to an adjusted score.
- 3 C 2 If a partnership has an agreement which varies from the traditional meaning, it is not sufficient to describe it on the system card as 'Modified X'. Particular care must be taken when describing two-suited overcalls. For example, 'Ghestem' should never be used as a description since there are many different versions.
- 3 C 3 Particular care must be taken with defences to 1NT, especially with bids that show either a two-suiter or the suit bid. Such understandings should be described in full.

3 D *Matters of style*

- 3 D 1 If a partnership has understandings such as opening lighter in third and/or fourth position or overcalling on four card suits, these should be disclosed on the system card.
- 3 D 2 If a partnership agrees to make take-out doubles of suit bids on almost all hands with opening bid values (not just on hands that are short in the opponent's suit or have substantial extra values), this should be disclosed on the system card. Similarly the practice of doubling for take-out on unusually weak hands should be marked on the system card.
- 3 D 3 Members of a partnership may play a different style from each other, for example while opening pre-empts one player may take more liberties with suit quality than the other. Any relevant information about style should be explained in answer to a question, and, where appropriate, disclosed on the system card.

3 SYSTEM CARDS

3 E *One of a Minor Opening Bids*

3 E 1 All 1♣ / 1♦ openings that might have two or fewer cards in the suit are considered **artificial**.

All 1♣ / 1♦ openings that show 3+ cards in the suit are considered **natural**.

3 E 2 Partnerships who play a 1♣ opening that may be made on a doubleton should indicate on the system card in which circumstances the 1♣ opening may be short, particularly when a four card diamond suit is also held.

3 F *One No Trump Opening Bids*

3 F 1 *Special Understandings*

Any special understandings about a natural opening 1NT should be indicated. For example: denying a 4-card major or not opening on some 12-counts.

3 F 2 *Singletons*

Partnerships who agree to play that a natural 1NT opening includes hands with a singleton must prominently disclose this fact, and must be careful to provide full disclosure of all understandings as to the use of a 1NT opening, stating when a singleton may be expected, and what rank of singleton may be expected. In addition, such 1NT openings must be announced as "... may contain a singleton" (*see 4E*).

3 G *'Multi-coloured 2♦' – 'Multi'*

3 G 1 *Meaning of 'Multi'*

The term Multi without qualification means a traditional multi-coloured 2♦ opening, i.e. a 2♦ opening that shows one of these three possibilities:

- (a) A weak hand with hearts
- (b) A weak hand with spades
- (c) A strong hand of one or more types.

A 2♦ opening that does not follow this rule must not be described as a Multi unless an appropriate qualification is included. For example, if there is no strong option it might be called a 'Weak only Multi'; if Hearts is the only weak option then it might be called a 'Hearts only Multi'.

3 H *Doubles*

3 H 1 *General*

The system card should be clear as to the circumstances in which any artificial double is used with the meaning described. If an artificial double (such as a double of a cue bid or a splinter) has an unusual meaning, such as being lead-directing but not related to the suit doubled, or suggesting NOT leading the suit doubled, this must be shown prominently on the system card. It is alertable at **all** levels of the auction – *see 4B4*.

The definitions of penalty and take-out doubles in sections 3H2 and 3H3 apply both for completing a system card and in defining the alerting rules.

3 SYSTEM CARDS

3 H 2 *Penalty doubles*

A penalty double suggests that the doubler believes, on the basis of his hand and the auction to date, that his side's best result on the board will be obtained by defending the doubled contract. Partner is expected to leave it in, though he can take-out on a hand very unsuitable for defence in the context of what he can be expected to hold for his actions (if any) to date. A penalty double which conveys additional information about the doubler's hand (such as a double of 3NT asking specifically for a spade lead) has a potentially unexpected meaning and should be alerted.

The practice of doubling an opening 1NT for penalties (especially in second seat) on balanced hands which have fewer than 15 HCP must be shown on the system card.

3 H 3 *Take-out doubles*

A take-out double suggests that the doubler wishes to compete, and invites partner to describe his hand. Take-out doubles are frequently based on shortage in the suit doubled and preparedness to play in the other unbid suits, failing which significant extra values may be expected. Partner is expected to take-out, though a pass may be made on a hand very suitable for defence in the context of what he can be expected to hold for his actions (if any) to date.

A double that shows a specific feature of the doubler's hand (such as a 'support' double promising three cards in partner's major) has a potentially unexpected meaning and should be alerted. *See also 4H4 and 4H5.*

3 J *Leads, signals and discards*

3 J 1 The system card must make clear all partnership understandings regarding leads, signals and discards.

3 J 2 If the meaning of a signal depends upon the situation, the primary meaning and any alternative meanings must be stated on the system card. For example, if a high card normally shows an even number but is instead encouraging in some positions, this could be described as 'high = even (encouraging)'.

3 J 3 If a partnership has agreed what to play on the second round of a suit, such as to give current count, original count, original 4th highest, this should be shown on the system card.

3 K *Matters to which special attention should be drawn*

3 K 1 The section on the front of the EBU 20B marked 'Other Aspects of System which opponents should note' should include brief details of any non-standard understandings such as canapé, artificial suit responses to opening bids, special doubles at a high level, two-suited overcalls (e.g. 'Ghestem'), or matters of style which are uncommon (e.g. very weak responses). Note that it is sufficient to name an agreement in this section of the card as long as it is described in full inside the card.

3 L *Inadequate Information*

3 L 1 In the event of a dispute, if a partnership's system cards contain inaccuracies, lack relevant information, fail to disclose explicit or implicit understandings, disagree materially with each other or disagree materially with any explanations given, TDs and Appeals Committees will give the benefit of doubt to the opponents. Such shortcomings will prejudice any claim that it was the call rather than the explanation which was mistaken. (**Law75**)

4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

4 A *General*

- 4 A 1 The purpose of alerting and announcing is to draw to the opponents' attention a call by partner that may have a special meaning.
- 4 A 2 Announcements: instead of an alert in the traditional manner, the partner of a player who makes an announceable bid makes a specified statement about the bidder's hand.
- 4 A 3 Alerting and announcing are compulsory; a player may not ask opponents not to alert or announce.
- 4 A 4 Alert or announce only your partner's calls, never your own.
- 4 A 5 Even if you cannot explain the meaning of partner's call, you should still alert (or announce) it if you believe that is required.
- 4 A 6 If there is no alert and no announcement, opponents can assume that the call does not fall within an alertable or announceable category, through either explicit or implicit understanding. *See also 2D2*
- 4 A 7 Do not alert or announce any play of the cards.
- 4 A 8 It is the responsibility of the alerting player to ensure that **both** of his opponents are aware of the alert.

4 B *Basic alerting rules*

4 B 1 *Passes and bids*

Unless it is announceable (*see 4D, 4E, 4F and 4G*), a pass or bid must be alerted if it:

- (a) is not natural; or
- (b) is natural but has a potentially unexpected meaning.

4 B 2 *Doubles*

The rules for alerting doubles are:

- (a) Suit bids that show the suit bid
Alert, unless the double is for take-out.
- (b) Minor suit openings which may be shorter than three cards but which may be natural and which do not promise a strong hand
Alert, unless the double is for take-out.
- (c) No trump bids
Alert, unless the double is for penalties.
- (d) Suit bids that do not show the suit bid
Alert, unless the double shows the suit bid.

Doubles are also alertable if they convey a potentially unexpected meaning in addition to take-out or penalties (*see 3H2 and 3H3*).

In **4B2(a)** and **(d)** the word 'show' is defined as follows:

'it is natural, or shows willingness, in the context of the auction, to play in the suit, or it has been followed by two passes'.

4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

4 B 3 *Redoubles*

A redouble to show general strength which partner will normally pass if the next hand passes is not alertable. All other redoubles are alertable.

4 B 4 *Calls above 3NT*

Once the auction is **above** the level of 3NT, no calls are to be alerted except for:

- (a) Artificial suit bids above 3NT made on the first round of the auction (defined as the **first bid** and the next three calls)
e.g. 1♠ pass 4♣ (splinter) or pass pass 1♠ pass 4♣ (splinter). In both cases 4♣ is alerted
- (b) Lead-directing passes
- (c) Doubles or redoubles that are lead-directing but ask for the lead of a suit other than the suit doubled (or redoubled)
- (d) Doubles and redoubles of no trump contracts that call for a specific suit to be led.

4 C *'Natural' bids and passes*

4 C 1 The following are considered 'natural' for the purposes of alerting and regulation of partnership understandings (*see also 3E1*):

- (a) A bid of a suit which shows that suit (3+ cards) and does not show any other suit; preference bids, completion of transfer bids and raises may be on shorter suits
- (b) A bid of no trumps which shows a preparedness to play in no trumps, and which conveys no unusual information about suit holdings; it must not be forcing unless a forcing auction has already been created. Note that certain ostensibly natural no trump bids are permitted to allow a shortage by agreement
- (c) A pass which does not unexpectedly convey values or specify suit holdings.

4D *Alerts and announcements – 1♣ and 1♦ openings*

4 D 1 Prepared or short 1♣ and 1♦ openings (which may be made on two cards or fewer) are announced as "may be" followed by the minimum number e.g. "May be two". Strong and artificial 1♣ and 1♦ openings are alerted as are a two way 1♣ opening such as the Polish Club and any opening which may be short but is **unconditionally forcing**.

4 E *Announcements – 1NT Openings and Responses*

4 E 1 Natural 1NT openings are announced by stating the range, e.g. by saying "12 to 14". Where a 1NT opening which is in principle natural may be made by agreement on some hands which contain a singleton, it is announced by stating the range followed by "may contain a singleton".

4 E 2 A Stayman 2♣ bid is announced, but only in response to a natural 1NT opening where there has been no intervention; and only where it is used to ask for a four card major. Opener says "Stayman". After such a 2♣ response a standard 2♦ rebid by opener is not alerted. Unusual replies such as the opener bidding 2NT or higher or 2♠ showing spades but **not** denying hearts should be alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it *shows* a four card major.

4 E 3 Red suit transfers at the two level i.e. ♦ to ♥ and ♥ to ♠, are announced, but only in response to a natural 1NT opening where there has been no intervention, and where the transfer shows

4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

at least five cards in the major suit concerned. Opener says “Hearts” when 2♦ is bid, or “Spades” when 2♥ is bid.

4 F Announcements – Two of a Suit Openings

4 F 1 A natural (5+ cards) opening bid of two of a suit is announced by stating its range from the following categories. Partner of the opener says the words shown.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) “Strong, forcing” | (b) “Strong, not forcing” |
| (c) “Intermediate” | (d) “Weak” |

4 F 2 It is possible to play a wide-ranging opening that covers more than one category, in which case the announcement should say so. Examples are:

- (a) “Intermediate to strong, forcing” or (b) “Weak to Intermediate”

For example, a 6-12 opening would be described as “Weak to intermediate”.

4 F 3 Distributional constraints do not stop an opening bid being considered natural. For example, a Precision 2♣ opening is traditionally only made on a 5-card suit when there is a 4-card major, but also may be made with a longer club suit and no major. A Precision 2♣ is considered natural since no other suit is guaranteed and thus is announced as “intermediate”. Some openings **guarantee** another suit so are not natural. For example a Lucas 2♠, showing spades and another suit, is alerted not announced.

4 F 4 **All** two of a suit openings are either announced (if natural, 5+ cards) or alerted (if artificial).

4 G Announcements – 2NT openings and responses

4 G 1 Natural 2NT openings are announced by stating the range, e.g. by saying “20 to 22”. It is not necessary to add “may contain a singleton”.

4 G 2 A Stayman 3♣ bid is announced, but only in response to a natural 2NT opening where there has been no intervention; and only where it is used to ask for a four card major. Opener says “Stayman”. After such a 3♣ response a 3♦ rebid by opener denying a major does not need an alert. Unusual responses such as opener bidding 3NT or higher or 3♠ showing spades but not denying hearts should be alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it *shows* a four card major.

4 G 3 Red suit transfers at the three level, i.e. ♦ to ♥ and ♥ to ♠, are announced, but only in response to a natural 2NT opening where there has been no intervention, and where the transfer shows at least five cards in the major suit concerned. Opener says “Hearts” when 3♦ is bid, or “Spades” when 3♥ is bid.

4 H Specific Cases

The following are interpretations and examples of the above directives.

4 H 1 Because they are not natural, players must alert (unless excepted by 4B4 above):

- (a) Stayman and transfers, except when announceable (*see 4 E*). For example:
- (1) In response to a 1NT overcall
 - (2) Opener’s rebid of 2♦ in response to a 2♣ enquiry or 3♦ in response to a 3♣ enquiry which was not announceable

4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

(3) A response of 2♦ to 1NT that usually shows hearts but may have another hand type e.g. strong, balanced included in the 2♦ response

(4) Five card Stayman or Puppet Stayman

(b) Any trial bid in a suit that may contain fewer than three cards

(c) Any 'pass or correct' bids e.g. 1♥ - 2♥ (spades + a minor) – Pass - 3♣ asking partner to pass with clubs or bid with diamonds

(d) A pass that shows unexpected extra values

(e) Any forcing pass.

4 H 2 Because they have a potentially unexpected meaning, players must alert:

(a) An opening bid of one of a suit which is forcing

(b) The first bid in a potential canapé sequence

(c) Responses to a non-forcing opening bid of one of a suit:

(1) If the next hand doubles, a pass that could have 10+ HCP or other defined characteristics

(2) If the next hand passes, a pre-emptive raise to three

(3) A non-forcing new suit response below game, unless responder has previously passed, bids over a natural NT overcall, or makes a double jump)

(4) A forcing raise

(5) A new suit without a jump that is forcing to game.

(d) A forcing non-jump natural response to an opening natural 1NT bid, whether in competition or not

(e) A minimum suit response to a take-out double, with the next hand passing, that shows values

(f) The completion of a transfer that specifically denies four card support or shows three card support

(g) The pass in the specific sequence (1 of a suit) dbl (redbl) pass if it is for penalties: the expected meaning is a request for partner to bid.

(h) A 1NT response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening which might show up to 12 HCP.

4 H 3 Players should **not** alert:

(a) Any announceable call

(b) Calls above 3NT unless specified as alertable in *4B4*

(c) A non-forcing 1♣ or 1♦ opening bid promising three or more cards (*but see 4H2(b)*)

(d) A bid of two of a suit by responder when an opening 1NT has been doubled, if it is ostensibly natural but there is a possibility that responder will remove or redouble for take out: this is considered general bridge knowledge

(e) A minimum rebid in ♦ after an announceable Stayman 2♣ or 3♣ response

(f) A pass of a redouble that suggests playing in the redoubled contract (*but see 4H2(g)*).

4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

4 H 4 The following doubles must be alerted:

- (a) A double of an opening natural 1NT which may have less than the normally accepted strength for a penalty double (i.e. 15 HCP or compensating distribution)
- (b) A double of a 1NT response which is for take out of opener's suit
- (c) Any 'competitive', 'co-operative' or 'optional' double, since these are not take-out doubles
- (d) A penalty double of a natural 2♦ in the sequence 1♦ (pass) 1♥ (2♦) dbl
- (e) A double of 1♦ in the sequence 1♣ (1♦) dbl if it shows one specific suit, since this is a potentially unexpected additional meaning
- (f) A take-out double which has unusual strength constraints, such as a double of a weak two opening showing 16+ HCP, as this is a potentially unexpected additional meaning.

4 H 5 The following doubles must not be alerted:

- (a) Any 'negative' or 'responsive' double played in a traditional manner, such as 1♣ (1♠) dbl showing 4 hearts. 1♣/1♦ (1♥) dbl is not alertable either if it shows exactly four spades, it may have four spades or if it shows general values without four spades (other meanings, such as 4+ spades, are alertable)
- (b) A take-out double of a transfer completion such as (1NT) pass (2♥) pass (2♠) dbl since this is deemed to show the suit bid
- (c) A take-out double of a 'pass-or-correct' bid such as (2♦ Multi) pass (2♠) dbl since this is deemed to show the suit bid.

5 RULES FOR PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS

5 A Basic

- 5 A 1 It is each player's duty to ensure that the partnership understandings used are permitted.
- 5 A 2 The members of a partnership must have the same bidding understandings and play the same system of leads, signals and discards.
- 5 A 3 A partnership may define the strength of a hand using any method of hand evaluation that will be understood easily by its opponents (High Card Points (HCP), Playing tricks, Losing Trick Count, etc). Regardless, your understandings must meet the permitted minimums defined in terms of HCP and 'Rule of 18/19/25' (*see 7B1 and 7B3*).
- 5 A 4 Players who have an understanding to make calls which have no specified meaning ('random' calls) must take great care over disclosure, particularly of negative inferences, and such players will be ruled against unless a TD is completely satisfied that the understandings have been fully disclosed.

These are only allowed in positions where there is no restriction on permitted methods.

- 5 A 5 A partnership may play two basic systems at different positions or vulnerabilities only in Level 4 or Level 5 competitions, and only where rounds are of 7 boards or more. The partnership must display two system cards for each system, indicating the occasions when the different systems apply.

It is always permitted to vary certain parts of a system according to position and/or vulnerability. This includes, for example, variable NT openings and playing four or five card majors in different positions.

- 5 A 6 A partnership may play any number of different basic systems in one event provided that they play only one system against any given opposing partnership (other than as permitted by 5A5).

5 B High Card Points (HCP)

A method of valuing honour strength. An Ace is worth 4 HCP, a King 3 HCP, a Queen 2 HCP and a Jack 1 HCP. There are thus 40 HCP in total in any one deal.

5 C Rule of 19 (and Rule of 18, 25)

- 5 C 1 A method of hand valuation calculated by adding the HCP to the sum of the number of cards in the two longest suits. It is used for defining the agreed strength – normally the minimum strength – which is permitted for various bids, most commonly opening bids.

- 5 C 2 Example

| | (A) | (B) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | ♠ J 8 4 3 2 | ♠ A J 8 7 2 |
| | ♥ 3 | ♥ 6 |
| | ♦ A 4 3 | ♦ K J 9 3 2 |
| | ♣ K 6 5 4 | ♣ 8 6 |
| High Card Points: | 8 | 9 |
| No. of cards in longest suit: | 5 | 5 |
| No. of cards in 2nd longest suit: | 4 | 5 |
| Total value by 'Rule of 19': | 17 | 19 |

5 RULES FOR PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS

At Level 2, for example, it is permitted to agree to open on hands meeting the Rule of 19, so a partnership may agree to open 1♠ on (B), but not on (A).

5 C 3 Strong openings are often described as 'Extended Rule of 25' which means the minimum allowed is any one or more of:

- (a) any hand of at least 16 HCP, or
- (b) any hand meeting the Rule of 25, or
- (c) subject to proper disclosure, a hand that contains at least the normal high-card strength associated with a one-level opening and at least eight clear cut tricks.

Clear-cut tricks are defined as tricks expected to make opposite a void in partner's hand with the second best suit break.

♠ A K Q J x x x x ♥ x x ♦ x x ♣ x does count as 8 clear-cut tricks

♠ A K Q x x x x x ♥ x x ♦ x x ♣ x does not

Hands conforming to the 'Extended Rule of 25' are described as 'ER25'.

Further examples:

AKQxxxxx (7CCT), KQJxxxx (5), AQJ98xx (5), KQJTx (3), KQJTxxx (6), AKT9xxxxx (8), KJTxxx (2)

5 D **Variations**

5 D 1 It is generally allowed to vary a permitted understanding by making it more restrictive. Thus if a certain call is shown as playable in Sections 6 or 7 subject to a certain minimum strength then it may be played with a higher minimum. Similarly suits may be played as longer than the minimum shown.

5 E **Legal control of non-conventional bids**

5 E 1 The EBU designates all understandings that it regulates as 'special partnership understandings'. **See Law 40B.**

5 E 2 At Levels 2 and 4

- (a) A partnership may **not** agree to open a natural 1♥ or 1♠ on 3 or fewer cards
- (b) A partnership may **not** agree to make a natural overcall on 3 or fewer cards
- (c) A partnership may **not** agree to overcall solely to show strength in the suit bid rather than length
- (d) A partnership may **not** agree to open at the one level on hands weaker than as allowed by *6C and 7B*.

6 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 2

6 A Introduction

6 A 1 This level is suggested for novice events, no fear events and events where there are several flights and a separate level is wanted for the lowest flight. The regulations are intentionally expository rather than prescriptive.

6 B General

6 B 1 Regulations apply only to calls made before opener's rebid. From opener's rebid onwards any understandings are allowed.

6 B 2 Any natural call is permitted, subject to the restrictions on the strength of opening bids in [6C1](#)

6 C One Level Openings

6 C 1 A one-level opening bid in a suit must either show 11+ HCP, or show 8+ HCP and satisfy the Rule of 19. [See 5C2](#)

6 C 2 An opening 1NT must be non-forcing. It may show any agreed range with at least 10 HCP, with no singleton or void and no 7-card suit.

6 C 3 Within those constraints you may play any common English system e.g.:

- Natural one-level openings (such as Acol), including the possibility of a three-card minor suit opening on some balanced hands
- Five-card majors with better minor or a short club suit
- A strong club, possibly with a nebulous 1♦ opening (e.g. Precision, Blue Club, Nottingham Club). You must agree that the 1♣ opening satisfies ER25.

You can play all the standard responses, but (apart from negative responses to a Strong 1♣ opening, or a catch-all 1NT response) you cannot play artificial weak bids in response to a one-level suit opening.

6 D Two Level Opening Bids

6 D 1 Any opening that shows 4+ cards in the suit opened is allowed (e.g. Acol Twos, Lucas or Weak Twos, a Precision 2♣ opening), as is any meaning or meanings showing a hand conforming to ER25 (e.g. Benjamin 2♣ and 2♦ openings).

6 D 2 A two-level opening showing a three-suited (4441, 5431 or 5440) opening bid including length (three or more cards) in the suit opened is also allowed. Alternatively, two of a suit may show a three-suited opening bid short in the suit opened (such as the Precision 2♦ opening).

6 D 3 'Multi' style openings are *not* allowed, nor is a 2NT opening bid showing the minors.

6 E Other Conventional Openings

6 E 1 A 3NT opening may be used to show a solid minor.

6 E 2 4♣ and/or 4♦ may be used as 'South African Texas' (4♣ showing a good 4♥ opening, 4♦ a good 4♠ opening).

6 E 3 A 3♣ opening may be played as 5-5 in the minors, any strength; or alternatively as 6+ clubs with a four-card major, denying 3+ cards in the other major, any strength.

6 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 2

6 F *Defensive Bidding*

6 F 1 You may play any methods in second or fourth seat after:

- (a) an artificial one-level opening (not promising *at least* three cards in the suit opened), or
- (b) any forcing opening, or
- (c) any two-level or higher opening

6 F 2 *Second Seat – after a natural non-forcing one -level suit opening*

A double of a natural opening bid or response must be either take-out or penalty.

A 1NT overcall or any suit bid must be natural, with the following exceptions:

- (a) A jump overcall in a suit, a no trump overcall (jump or not) or a cue-bid (jump or not) may alternatively be used to show a two-suited hand (any range, and any suits, as long as at least one of the suits is specified)
- (b) A 2NT overcall may alternatively be used to show any two-suited ER25 hand without specifying either suit
- (c) A 1NT overcall in second seat may alternatively be used as a takeout bid
- (d) A cue bid may be used to show any ER25 hand

6 F 3 *In Fourth Seat – after a natural one-level suit opening*

You may have any understandings in fourth seat after

- (a) an artificial response to a one-level opening bid, or
- (b) opener's suit is raised by responder, or
- (c) second seat overcalls 1NT, or
- (d) second seat overcalls showing a ER25 hand, or
- (e) second seat overcalls showing a two-suited hand

You may use a cue bid in fourth seat as a general force or to show a good raise of partner's overcall.

Overcalls and responses to second seat overcalls must otherwise be natural.

6 G *Defending against 1NT*

6 G 1 Double must, by agreement, be for penalties in second seat. In fourth seat or by a passed hand any defence is permitted.

6 G 2 Two-level overcalls must specify at least one suit (although 2NT can alternatively also be used to show an ER25 unspecified two-suiter). In addition, 2♣ can show a (semi)-balanced hand with three or more clubs ('Roche').

6 G 3 After a natural response to 1NT, double must be one of takeout, penalty, or showing a penalty double of an opening 1NT. Any defence is permitted against an artificial response such as Stayman or a transfer.

6 G 4 All other overcalls or responses to second seat overcalls must be natural (other than a cue bid of opener's or responder's suit to show a good hand).

6 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 2

6 H *Leads, Signals and Discards*

6 H 1 Any system of leads, signals and discards may be used as long as the system card gives reasonable detail, except that dual meaning signals and encrypted carding methods are not permitted (*for details, see 7F2 and 7F3*).

7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

7 A *General*

7 A 1 The only methods regulated are a player's initial pass, opening bids below 3NT and immediate overcalls. From responder's first call onwards all partnership understandings are permitted.

7 A 2 *Pass*

A pass before any player has bid must not show, or usually have, any values

A pass directly after a natural, non-forcing one-level suit opening bid must not show, or usually have, any values.

7 A 3 *Strength of Opening One-level Bids*

All one-level opening bids, whether forcing or not, must by agreement show 8+ HCP and, in first and second position, follow the Rule of 18. Natural 1NT opening bids must show 9+ HCP.

7 B *One Level Openings*

7 B 1 *1♣ and 1♦ openings*

1♣ or 1♦ may each be played to have any **one** of options (i)-(v) below

- (i) Any meaning, as long as this does not include unbalanced hands with a 5-card or longer major (unless the bid minor is of equal length or longer), or
- (ii) Forcing, with any meaning or meanings as long as they all show an ER25 hand, or
- (iii) **Either** 4+ cards in the suit bid plus a longer side suit OR any combination of
 - (a) a balanced or semi-balanced hand of a defined range
 - (b) single-suited in the suit bid
 - (c) any 4441
 - (d) clubs and diamonds
- (iv) *Any meaning showing at least four cards in a specified suit, forcing or not
- (v) *A combination of both (i) and (ii) above ('Polish Club' or 'Three-Way Club')

7 B 2 *1♥ and 1♠ openings*

Any meaning is permitted which shows 4 (or more) cards in the suit opened.

7 B 3 *1NT opening*

1NT may be played as any **one** of the following

- (i) Natural, non-forcing with a defined range. A 'natural' 1NT opening has no more than nine cards in two suits, no void, and does not have seven hearts or seven spades. The range must be the same when holding a singleton
- (ii) Any meaning or meanings as long as they all show an ER25 hand
- (iii) *A three-suited hand (5440, 5431 or 4441), the shortage need not be specified
- (iv) *Any meaning showing at least four cards in a specified suit, forcing or not

* These agreements were historically not permitted at Level 3. See section 8.

7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

7 C *Opening Bids from 2♣ to 3♠ inclusive*

7 C 1 *General, including 'Multi' style opening bids*

These may be played as one or both of (a) and (b) below

- (a) Any meaning or meanings as long as they all show an ER25 hand, and/or
- (b) At most one from the following four options:
 - (i) Any meaning or meanings which all show at least four cards in the suit opened, or
 - (ii) Any meaning or meanings which all show at least five cards in the same one specified suit, or
 - (iii) Any meaning which shows at least 4-4 in two specified suits, or
 - (iv) Any combination of meanings that show either or both of
 - 1) At least five cards in an unspecified suit which may not be the suit opened, and/or
 - 2) At least 5-4 in two unspecified suits, neither of which may be the suit opened.

Notes:

- (a) For an opening bid of 2NT, b(i) is not applicable and for b(iv) there are no restrictions on which suit(s) may be shown
- (b) There is no limit to the number of types of ER25 hand included (if any) under (a), nor to the number of hand types, if any, included under (b) so long as they are all covered by the same sub-option from (i) – (iv)
- (c) Opening suit bids with no 'anchor' suit which may or may not have length in the suit opened are particularly difficult to defend against, which is why they are not permitted. However, players are permitted to open (say) 2♦ showing a weak two in either major while coincidentally also holding diamond length, as long as they have no specific understanding to do so.

7 C 2 *Three-suited opening bids*

Alternatively an opening bid of 2♣, 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ may be played as **one** of the following

- (a) A three-suiter (5440, 5431 or 4441) with at least three cards in the suit bid (the shortage need not be specified), minimum strength at least 10 HCP, or
- (b) A three-suiter, short in the suit bid, minimum strength at least 10 HCP.

7 D *Opening Bids of 3NT and higher*

These may have any agreed meaning.

7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

7 E Defence to Opening Bids in Second (Direct) Seat

7 E 1 General

Any partnership understandings are permitted after

- (a) an artificial or forcing one-level suit opening (*see 3E1*), or
- (b) an opening bid of 1NT or above.

7 E 2 Defence to Natural, Non-Forcing Opening Bids of 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠ - General

Any meaning is permitted for double.

Any meaning is permitted for a jump cue bid (at any level).

Any bid which shows at least four cards in a specified suit is permitted. The quality of the suit and the strength of the hand must conform to the standards generally played for a natural call at the level that would result from bidding the suit at the minimum level now possible (bids showing at least 5-5 in two suits may traditionally be made on very weak hands).

Any bid which shows a semi-balanced hand (i.e. with no singleton, void or seven-card suit) of at least 11 HCP is permitted.

7 E 3 1NT overcall of a natural non-forcing opening bid of 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠

A 1NT overcall may, instead of a meaning allowed by **7E2**, be played as any **one** of the following:

- (a) Natural, i.e. no more than nine cards in two suits, no void and no seven-card major, with a defined range and a minimum of at least 9 HCP, or
- (b) A take-out bid (similar to a take-out double) of any agreed strength, or
- (c) **Either* a balanced hand with at least 14 HCP *or* a weak hand with a long suit, or
- (d) *A weak hand with a long suit.

7 E 4 Other Specific permissions after a one-level opening bid of 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠

A non-jump cue bid may, instead of a meaning allowed by **7E2**, be played as either one of the following

- (a) An ER25 hand, any meaning or meanings, or
- (b) A take-out bid (similar to a take-out double) of any agreed strength

A 2NT overcall may be used to show an ER25 two-suiter with no suit specified

A 2♣ overcall may be used to show a 'weak take-out double' with no more than a singleton in the suit opened and at least 3 cards in the other three suits.

7 F Carding

7 F 1 Any system of leads, signals and discards may be used as long as the system card gives reasonable detail (*see 3J*), and subject to the specific restrictions in **7F2 and 7F3**.

7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

7 F 2 *Encrypted carding*

No partnership understanding is permitted whereby the meaning of a lead, signal or discard is based in principle on information not available to declarer, so no form of 'encrypted' carding is permitted.

An agreement may arise typically where dummy has a long suit missing the Ace, and no outside entry, and involves the defender with the Ace of the suit giving a signal along Smith Peter or suit-preference lines, i.e. a signal concerning another suit, while the defender without the Ace gives a count signal. As an exception to the ban on encrypted signals, a count signal is permitted in place of a Smith Peter in such situations provided that the use of the method is fully disclosed.

7 F 3 *Dual meaning signals*

Dual meaning signals (when following suit) are not permitted.

Examples of prohibited dual meaning signals:

- (a) One message (typically attitude) is given according to whether the card played is odd or even; a different message (typically suit preference) is given according to whether the card played is high or low.
- (b) One message (typically attitude) is given if a specific card (say a 6 or a 7) is played; a different message (typically suit preference) is given if any other card is played. It is, however, permitted to use a particular category of card to express doubt or no preference. For example, when giving suit-preference a partnership may agree that a middle card shows no preference between the two suits.

Such dual meanings are permitted for discards.

8 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: OTHER PERMISSIONS

8 A *Introduction*

8 A 1 The EBU no longer runs events at Level 3 and suggests that, as the differences between Level 3 and Level 4 were minor, that there is no requirement for it. However, clubs and County Associations may wish to continue to run events with permitted understandings in line with the old Level 3, particularly with regard to the range of artificial pre-emptive openings allowed. This section summarises a suitable set of permitted understandings defined partly by identifying those at the current Level 4 that were not permitted at Level 3.

8 A 2 *Comparison to the 'old' Level 3*

The set of permitted partnership understandings described here is mainly in line with Level 3 for opening bids and overcalls. Historically, Level 3 also restricted the meaning of a second seat take-out double and actions in fourth seat. These restrictions have not been included here, for consistency with the changes also made in 2013 to Level 4.

8 B *Opening Bids and Overcalls at the One Level*

8 B 1 All opening bids and overcalls at the one level permitted at Level 4 are permitted with the exception of those marked with a star (*). *See 7B and 7E3.*

8 C *Two-Level and higher Opening Bids*

8 C 1 *Opening Bids in a Suit from 2♣ to 3♠*

These may be played as **one** of the following

- (a) Any meaning or meanings as long as they all show an ER25 hand, or
- (b) Any meaning or meanings which show at least four cards in the suit opened, or
- (c) 2♣ or 2♦ may be played to show at least 4-4 in the majors

8 C 2 *'Multi' 2♦*

Alternatively, a 2♦ opening may be played to contain a weak option and one or two strong options.

(a) Weak option

A defined range of no more than 5 HCP, a minimum strength of 4 HCP and a maximum of 12 HCP. The agreed strength may differ according to position and/or vulnerability.

The suit may be played as either (i) 5+ hearts; or (ii) 5+ hearts or 5+ spades

(b) Strong options

The minimum strength is ER25. At least one strong option must be of reasonable frequency.

One or two of the following may be played:

- (i) an Acol Two: the suit need not be specified
- (ii) a 4-4-4-1 (or 5-4-4-0) hand, with a defined range; the singleton/void need not be specified
- (iii) a balanced or semi-balanced hand (no singleton, void or seven card suit) with a defined range; alternatively it may be agreed that it may contain a singleton
- (iv) any game forcing hand.

8 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: OTHER PERMISSIONS

8 C 3 *Other two-level suit openings*

Alternatively an opening bid of 2♣, 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ may be played as **one** of the following

- (a) A three-suiter (5440, 5431 or 4441) with at least three cards in the suit bid (any shortage), minimum strength at least 'Rule of 18'
- (b) A three-suiter, short in the suit bid, minimum strength 'Rule of 18'

8 C 4 *Opening bids of 2NT*

A 2NT opening may be played as one of the following

- (a) Any meaning or meanings that show an ER25 hand, or
- (b) Both minors, any agreed strength

8 C 5 *Opening bids of 3NT*

These may be played as **one** of the following

- (a) Natural, or
- (b) An unspecified solid suit, with or without outside high cards, or
- (c) A single suiter, being one of at most two possible suits

8 C 6 *Opening bids of 4♣ and 4♦*

Each of these may be played as **one** of the following

- (a) Natural, any agreed range
- (b) 4♣ showing a strong 4♥ opener and/or 4♦ showing a strong 4♠ opener

8 C 7 *Higher Opening Bids*

Suit bids must be natural.

No trump bids may have any agreed meaning.

8 D *Other Partnership Understandings*

8 D 1 The rules for all other partnership understandings in the auction from responder's first bid onwards are identical to those at Level 4.

8 D 2 The rules for carding understandings are identical to those at Level 4.

9 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 5

9 A *General*

At Level 5 any understanding is allowed that is permitted either at WBF/EBL Category 3 or at EBU Level 4 (whether or not the latter are categorised as 'HUM' or 'Brown Sticker' by the WBF).

Full details of the WBF system regulations can be found at <http://www.worldbridge.org/Data/Sites/1/media/documents/official-documents/Policies/WBFSystemsPolicy.pdf>

9 A 1 *Definitions*

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Average Hand | a hand containing 10 HCP with no distributional values |
| Weak | high-card strength below that of an average hand |

Note that ER25 does not apply in Level 5 events.

9 A 2 *Highly Unusual Methods (HUMs)*

Highly Unusual Methods may not be played unless they are permitted at EBU Level 4. A Highly Unusual Method means any system that exhibits one or more of the following features, as a matter of partnership understanding:

- (a) A Pass in the opening position shows at least the values generally accepted for an opening bid of one, even if there are alternative weak possibilities
- (b) An opening bid at the one level may be weaker than Pass
- (c) An opening bid at the one level may be made with values a king or more below average strength
- (d) An opening bid at the one level shows either length (3 cards or more) or shortage (two cards or fewer) in a specified suit
- (e) An opening bid at the one level shows either length (3 cards or more) in one suit or length in another.

EXCEPTION: one of a minor in a strong club or strong diamond system.

9 A 3 *Opening Bids of 2♣ to 3♠*

The following agreements or treatments may not be played, unless they are permitted at EBU Level 4:

- (a) Any opening bid of two clubs through three spades that:
could be weak (may by agreement be made with values below average strength)
AND
does not show at least four cards in a known suit.

EXCEPTIONS:

The bid always shows at least four cards in a known suit if it is weak. If the bid does not show a known four-card suit it must show a hand a king or more over average strength.

(Explanation: Where all the weak meanings show at least four cards in one known suit, and the strong meanings show a hand with a king or more above average strength, the bid is permitted.)

AKQxxx(x) in a single suit is not a hand which is below average strength.

9 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 5

- (b) An overcall of a natural opening bid of one of a suit that does not show at least four cards in a known suit.
- (c) Any 'weak' two-suited bids at the two or three level that may by agreement be made with three cards or fewer in one of the suits.
- (d) Psychic bids protected by system or required by system.

9 A 4 *Random openings*

It is forbidden to open hands which, by agreement, may contain fewer than 8 high-card points and for which no further definition is provided.

9 B *Carding*

Any system of leads, signals and discards may be used so long as reasonable details are entered on the system card (*see 3J*), and subject to the specific restrictions in *7F2 and 7F3*.

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