

BLUE BOOK

HANDBOOK OF  
EBU

PERMITTED UNDERSTANDINGS

Revised with amendments 2022





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EBU

PERMITTED UNDERSTANDINGS

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of the English Bridge Union

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Amendments to the 2021 edition are shown with change bars  
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# 1 General

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## 1 A **Introduction**

The Blue Book contains information that players are most likely to need. The White Book is mainly for Tournament Directors although some players may also find the content of interest. In 2022, both the Blue Book and White Book were extended to contain guidance and regulations for online bridge – material that was previously in the Sky-Blue Book.

We'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. We also thank everyone who has sent suggestions for improvement or pointed out where the regulations are unclear. We hope our members find it a useful service.

This book is effective from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.

**David Burn**

Chairman, Laws and Ethics Committee

**Robin Barker**

EBU Deputy Chief TD & Blue Book Editor

## 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:

The Secretary  
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| L&EC page:    | <a href="http://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics">http://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics</a> |                                  |

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 <https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/laws-and-ethics-committee>

## 1 C **Following published regulations**

Players entering events are required to follow the published regulations.

## 2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

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### **2 A**      *General*

2 A 1      Some of the regulations in this section self-evidently apply only to playing conditions where questions and explanations can be seen or heard by the whole table, and alerts and explanations are given by the bidder's partner. The Sky Blue Book contains additional or alternative regulations when playing online with self-alerting and the Screen Regulations (in the White Book or as part of the Conditions of Contest for specific events) cover live play with screens.

All partnership understandings, including implicit understandings and practices that arise from partnership experience, must be fully disclosed to opponents.

2 A 2      These regulations are secondary to the duty of full disclosure (**Law 40A**). If a player is uncertain whether the regulations require an alert, but believes it would help the opponents, he should alert. At the end of the auction the declaring side may offer additional information, even if not requested. In particular, they are encouraged to draw attention to any calls whose meaning the defending side have not asked about but may not expect.

2 A 3      It is expected that experienced players will protect themselves in obvious misinformation cases. If they receive an implausible explanation, and can 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 that can be seen or heard by the whole table must not be given during the auction unless asked for.

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 for a call, not how they intend to interpret it. They should say if there is no agreed meaning, but if there is any relevant partnership experience the answer should include it. If a player knows that there are multiple possible meanings for a call he should explain all of them. For example, if a pair plays 1NT P 4♥ as a transfer to spades but have not discussed intervention, the last bid in the auction 1NT (2♦) 4♥ should be alerted and explained as 'on the uncontested auction this would show spades, we haven't discussed what we play in competition' and not simply as 'no agreement'.

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 may be misinterpreted.

2 B 7      A questioner may ask for an explanation of either the entire auction or specific calls. In response, the opponents should provide all (relevant) information and inferences. The use of specific questions should be avoided since 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 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

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2 B 8 Regular play with one 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 for the bidding or the play. Similarly, an explanation such as, 'attitude or count, depending on what we think is needed' is unacceptable from an experienced partnership

### 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 for when 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 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) 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 unauthorised information
- (b) Partner has given an incorrect statement of the partnership understanding (including stating incorrectly that there is, or is not, any mutual agreement). 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 shown there. 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 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 call the TD and explain the situation at the appropriate time (**Law 75B**):

- (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 correctly, he must call the TD to explain the situation. The player must do this before the opening lead but may do so earlier. (**Law 20F4(a)**)



## 2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

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- 2 D 7 It is proper to use any unauthorised information to help 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 D 9 If partner has given an incorrect or incomplete explanation, alerted or failed to alert incorrectly, or made an incorrect announcement, a 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 misinformation is discovered from either side before the opening lead is faced, the TD may allow a change of the last call made by the other side, with the auction continuing. **(Law 21B1)**
- If an opponent's explanation is corrected while the opening lead is still face down, but the auction is not changed, the leader may be allowed to change the lead with the TD's permission. **(Laws 47E2)**

### **2 E** *Unauthorised Information*

- 2 E 1 A player has the right to ask questions at his turn to call or play, but if a player shows unusual interest in one or more calls, 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'. Players who do this must follow this approach strictly, since they otherwise risk transmitting UI. There are auctions where it may be sensible always to ask (such as after artificial intervention following partner's 1NT opening) as the player will always need to know the meaning before play starts.
- 2 E 3 Where a call always requires an alert or announcement (such as a 1NT opening) it is normal to wait for this; passing slowly or asking typically would not be considered to transmit UI.
- 2 E 4 When a player does wish to ask a question, it is recommended that he 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 really show clubs?'

## 3 SYSTEM CARDS

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### 3 A *General*

- 3 A 1 Pairs are required to have two fully completed system cards containing the same information. At the beginning of each round they should make these available to their opponents.

### 3 B *Types of system card*

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.
  - (c) The WBF system card is permitted only in EBU events held at Level 5. Tournament organisers such as County Associations may choose to permit it in other events.
- 3 B 2 Computer-produced versions of system cards must 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 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 as 'Modified X'. Particular care is needed when describing two-suited overcalls. For example, 'Ghestem' should never be used as a description since there are many different versions.
- 3 C 3 Defences to 1NT should be described in full, especially bids that show either a two-suiter or the suit bid.

### 3 D *Matters of style*

- 3 D 1 If a partnership has understandings such as opening lighter in third and/or fourth position, responding or overcalling very light 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 including length in opener's suit, 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 front of the card.
- 3 D 3 Members of a partnership may play a different style from each other, for example the strength or suit quality of an opening pre-empts. Any relevant information about style should be explained in answer to a question, and, where appropriate, disclosed on the system card.

### 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 SYSTEM CARDS

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3 E 2 Partnerships who play a 1♣ / 1♦ opening that may be made on a doubleton (or shorter) should indicate on the system card in which circumstances the opening may be short, particularly when four cards in the other minor or any other five card 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. They must state when a singleton may be expected, and of what rank. 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 when an artificial double is used with the meaning described. If a double 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 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 SYSTEM CARDS

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### 3 H 3 *Take-out doubles*

A take-out double suggests that the doubler wishes to compete and invites partner to describe his hand. Partner is expected to bid, though a pass may be made on a hand very suitable for defence in the context of the level of bid doubled and 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 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, unusual overcalls (e.g. 'Raptor'), or matters of style which are uncommon (e.g. very weak responses). Note that it is sufficient to name an agreement in this section as long as it is described in full inside the card. *See also 3D.*

### 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 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)**

## 3 M BIDDING BOXES

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### **3 M** *Bidding Boxes*

#### 3 M 1 *General*

The EBU has adopted the following procedures based on recommendations by the WBF.

Starting with the dealer, players place their calls on the table in front of them, from the left and neatly overlapping, so that all calls are visible and faced towards partner. Players should refrain from touching any cards in the box until they have determined their call. A call is considered to have been made when the call is removed from the bidding box with apparent intent (but the TD may apply Law 25).

Some left-handed bidding boxes are available, where the calls are placed in a row from right to left.

Certain bidding cards have regulations on the back. These do not take precedence over EBU regulations.

#### 3 M 2 *Use of the STOP Card*

Before making a jump bid (i.e. a bid at a higher level than the minimum in that denomination) a player should place the Stop card in front of them, place their call at once, and then eventually remove the Stop card. Their LHO should not call until the Stop card has been removed.

The Stop card should be left on the table for about ten seconds, to give the next player time to reflect. It should not be removed prematurely.

After a jump bid, the next player **MUST** pause for about ten seconds before calling. It is an offence either not to pause or to show indifference when pausing. If the Stop card has been removed prematurely or has not been used, an opponent should nevertheless pause as though the Stop card had been used correctly.

If a Stop card is taken from the box no call has been made until the card for the actual bid is taken out. Thus a player who has pulled out the Stop card is entitled to change their mind and make a call which is not a jump bid. Also a Stop card played out of turn is not a call out of turn, and the player can make any legal call when it reaches their turn. Unauthorised information is available to partner in either case.

#### 3 M 3 *End of the Auction*

At the end of the auction the calls should remain in place until the opening lead has been faced and all explanations have been obtained, after which they should be returned to their boxes. If the hand is passed out then the passes are immediately returned to their boxes.

Calls made using cards are treated under the laws in the same way as spoken calls. For example, Law 25A applies to changing an unintended call made using a bidding card; see section 8.25 in the White Book.

Some players do not always complete the auction properly by laying a pass card on the table in the pass out seat. Usually this does not cause a problem. When a player acts in such a way as to indicate they have passed and an opening lead is faced and dummy is revealed, they have passed. An action may be deemed by the TD to be a pass (e.g. general 'waft' of the hand, tapping cards already there, picking up the cards).

## 4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

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### 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. If a player is uncertain whether the regulations require an alert, but believes it would help the opponents, he should alert (*see also 2A2*).
- 4 A 2 Announcements: instead of an alert in the traditional manner, the partner of a player who makes an announceable bid makes a statement about the bidder's hand. Recommended wording for announcements is given in this section; a pair may amend or extend an announcement if that gives a better description of the partnership understanding (e.g. 'good 11 – 14'). Both members of the partnership must always make the same announcement.
- 4 A 3 Alerting and announcing are compulsory; a player may not accede to a request not to alert or announce.
- 4 A 4 A player must alert or announce only partner's calls, never their own. (Special regulations apply when playing online with self-alerting or with screens.)
- 4 A 5 Even if a player cannot explain the meaning of partner's call, they should still alert (or announce) it if they believe that it may be required.
- 4 A 6 If there is no alert and no announcement, opponents can assume that there is an understanding (explicit or implicit) for the meaning of the call that does not require one. *See also 2D2*
- 4 A 7 Do not alert or announce any play of the cards.
- 4 A 8 The alerting player must make all reasonable efforts to ensure that **both** 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

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### 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 (including any which show a specific holding in a suit) 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 before the opening bidder's second turn to call (i.e. 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

For online bridge, with self-alerts, there are different rules for bids and passes above 3NT, see 10A2.

### 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 before the opening bidder's second turn to call which shows that suit and does not show any other suit. A natural bid before the opening bidder's second turn to call shows 4+ cards, except for a minimum opening or response in clubs or diamonds which only need show 3+ cards. Bids later in the auction also only need show 3+ cards. Preference bids, completion of transfer bids and raises may be on shorter suits
- (b) A bid of no trumps which is prepared to play there and which conveys no unusual information about strength or suit holdings; it must not be forcing unless a forcing auction has already been created. Note that 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 of a suit openings and responses*

4 D 1 Prepared or short 1♣ and 1♦ openings (which are non-forcing but may be made on two cards or fewer) are announced as 'may be' followed by the minimum number e.g. 'May be two'. Where the opening could have a five-card (or longer) suit without five cards in the suit opened, the announcement is extended as appropriate, such as 'May be two, with another five card suit'. The announcement may be altered in line with the partnership understanding, for example 'May be two with five diamonds'.

A canapé 1♣ or 1♦ opening (where the shorter suit is systemically opened on a two-suited hand) is alerted. 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 is **unconditionally forcing**.

4 D 2 In response to a non-forcing opening bid of one of a suit, a non-forcing 1NT response that can be made on more than 10 HCP is announced. Opener says 'Up to *n* points', where *n* is the upper limit for the bid (e.g. 'Up to 11' or 'Up to a bad 12').

4 D 3 In response to a non-forcing 1♣ opening, transfers are announced, but only where there has been no intervention and the bid is not a jump. Opener says 'Hearts' when 1♦ is bid or

## 4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

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'Spades' when 1♥ is bid. If 1♠ shows diamonds, opener says 'Diamonds'; if 1♠ denies a four-card or longer major, opener says 'No major'. If 1NT is forcing and guarantees four cards in a specified minor, opener names that minor. If 2♣ shows diamonds, opener says 'Diamonds'.

4 D 4 In response to a non-forcing opening bid of one of a suit, a new suit without a jump that is natural and forcing to game is announced. Opener says 'Game-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 by agreement 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 Transfers at the two level (♦ to ♥, ♥ to ♠, ♠ to ♣ and NT to ♦) are announced, but only in response to a natural 1NT opening where there has been no intervention, and where the transfer shows at least five cards in the suit concerned without any other possible meaning. Opener says 'Hearts' when 2♦ is bid, 'Spades' when 2♥ is bid, 'Clubs' when 2♠ is bid, or 'Diamonds' when 2NT is bid.

### 4 F *Announcements – Two of a Suit Openings*

4 F 1 A natural opening bid of two of a suit showing 5+ cards 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 and 5+ cards) or alerted (otherwise).

### 4 G *Announcements – 2NT Openings and Responses*

**Note** A 2NT opening is not announced.

4 G 1 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



## 4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

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denying hearts should be alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it *shows* a four card major.

- 4 G 2 Red suit transfers at the three level, i.e.  $\diamond$  to  $\heartsuit$  and  $\heartsuit$  to  $\spadesuit$ , 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  $3\diamond$  is bid, or 'Spades' when  $3\heartsuit$  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  $2\diamond$  in response to a  $2\clubsuit$  enquiry or  $3\diamond$  in response to a  $3\clubsuit$  enquiry where the enquiry was not announceable
  - (3) A response of  $2\diamond$  to 1NT that usually shows hearts but may have another hand type e.g. strong, balanced included in the  $2\diamond$  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.  $1\heartsuit - 2\heartsuit$  (spades + a minor) – Pass –  $3\clubsuit$  asking partner to pass with clubs or bid with diamonds
- (d) A pass that may have or shows unexpected extra values (it is not unexpected to pass on a strong hand that would like to double for penalties but cannot do so).
- (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, where by partnership agreement the shorter suit in any specific two-suited hand is always bid first (for example, if  $1\spadesuit$  is the systemic opening with four spades and a longer minor, but the longer major is opened with both majors,  $1\spadesuit$  should still be alerted).
- (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 forcing raise
  - (4) A new suit without a jump that is forcing to game and may be made on a suit of fewer than three cards.
- (d) A non-forcing new suit response, to a non-forcing suit opening at any level, below game, unless responder has previously passed, bids over a natural NT overcall, or makes a double jump
- (e) A minimum suit response to a take-out double, with the next hand passing, that shows values

## 4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

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- (f) The completion of a transfer that shows a specific holding in the suit bid (e.g. following a 1NT opening, a transfer completion 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 forcing response in no-trumps
- (i) A natural 1NT overcall in second seat that, by partnership agreement, may be made on significantly less than 15 HCP or have a small singleton or doubleton in opener's naturally bid suit

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

- (a) Any announceable call
- (b) Calls above 3NT unless specified as alertable in 4B4, or online (see 10A2)
- (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 when partner's natural 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 H 4 The following doubles and redoubles must be alerted:

- (a) A double in second seat of an opening natural 1NT (showing 11+ HCP) 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
- (g) A redouble after partner's opening bid is doubled that does not show 9+ HCP (e.g. 1♠ – dbl – redbl), or that shows a specific suit or specific holding in partner's suit, as these are potentially unexpected additional meanings.

4 H 5 The following doubles need 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 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 the last bid 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. (**Law 40A4**)
- 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, understandings must meet the permitted minimums defined in terms of HCP and 'Rule of 18/19' (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 provided that they play only one system against any given opposing partnership in one session (other than as permitted by 5A5). This does not prevent a partnership changing their basic system between sessions, for example between sets of a knock-out match.

### 5 B *High Card Points (HCP)*

HCP are 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 *Rules of 18 and 19*

- 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 minimum agreed strength permitted for opening bids.

- 5 C 2 Example

|                                   |             |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                   | ♠ 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          |

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 the second hand, but not the first.

## 5 RULES FOR PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS

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### **5 D Rules for “Strong” opening bid**

- 5 D 1 To be considered a “Strong” opening bid, the minimum allowed by agreement is:
- (a) Opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦: at least 13 HCP
  - (b) Above 1♦: at least 16 HCP, or 13 HCP concentrated in two suits containing 10+ cards.
- 5 D 2 The rule for “Strong”, in 5D1(b), is also used for artificial overcalls (see 6F2, 6G2, 7E2, 7E4).

### **5 E Variations**

A permitted understanding may be varied by making it more restrictive. If a 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 F Regulation of natural bids**

- 5 F 1 The EBU designates all understandings that it regulates as ‘special partnership understandings’. **See Law 40B.**
- 5 F 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 (other than when permitted under 6F1 or 7E1)
  - (d) A partnership may **not** agree to open at the one level on hands weaker than as allowed by 6C and 7A3.
- 5 F 3 Pairs who deviate from the requirements above (5F2) will usually be considered to have done so by agreement unless they can demonstrate otherwise. See also 7C3 Note (4).

## 6 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 2

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### **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 any common English system may be played 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). The 1♣ opening must, by agreement, satisfy 5D1(a) above.

All the standard responses are permitted, but (apart from negative responses to a Strong 1♣ opening, or a catch-all 1NT response) artificial weak bids in response to a one-level suit opening are not.

### **6 D Two Level Opening Bids**

6 D 1 These may be played as any one of the following meanings:

(a) Natural, defined as 5+ cards in the suit opened

(b) Any "Strong" hand (see 5D1(b) above)

(c) A 3-suited hand (5440, 4441 or 5431) with a specified shortage and opening bid strength

#### Notes:

- A 2NT opening must always be Strong
- Multi style openings are not allowed

### **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 F Defensive Bidding**

6 F 1 Any methods in second or fourth seat are allowed after:

- (a) an artificial one-level opening (not promising *at least* three cards in the suit opened), or

## 6 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 2

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- (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 strong hand (see 5D1(b)) 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 strong hand (see 5D1(b))

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

Any understandings in fourth seat are allowed 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 strong hand, or
- (e) second seat overcalls showing a two-suited hand

A cue bid in fourth seat may be used 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 a strong (see 5D1(b)) 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 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 some specific complex signals and encrypted carding methods are not permitted (*for details, see 7F2 and 7F3*).

## 7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

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### 7 A **General**

7 A 1 The only methods regulated are the 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 or directly after a natural, non-forcing one-level suit opening bid must not show, or usually have, any values (a split range pass such as 0-8 balanced or 17+ any is not permitted).

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

A one-level opening bid in a suit, 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)-(iv) below

- (i) Forcing or not, showing any combination of the following hand types:
  - a) At least four cards in the suit bid
  - b) At least four cards in the other minor
  - c) Any distribution that satisfies the requirements for a natural 1NT opening (see 7B3(i) below) subject to the minimum strength requirement of 7A3 for suit openings.
- (ii) Forcing, with any meaning or meanings as long as they are all "Strong" (see 5D1(a))
- (iii) \*Any meaning showing at least four cards in a specified suit, forcing or not
- (iv) \*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 continuous 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 a strong hand (see 5D1(b))
- (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

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

#### 7 C 1 *Suit opening bids*

These may be played as one or more meanings within (a), or (b), or (c). Alternatively any number of meanings of (a) may be combined with a single meaning from (b) or (c).

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

## 7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

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- (a) Any “Strong” hand (see 5D1(b) above)
- (b) Natural, defined as either of the following in the suit opened:
  - (i) 5+ cards, or
  - (ii) 4+ cards if a second suit is also specified
- (c) Non-natural, defined as either:
  - (i) Any hand that shows 5+ cards in at least one suit, specified or not, but which must not show 4+ cards in the suit opened, or
  - (ii) Any hand that shows at least 4-4 in two specified suits, neither of which is the suit opened, or
  - (iii) A 3-suited hand (5440, 4441 or 5431) with any specified shortage

### 7 C 2 *2NT Opening*

Can be played as any meaning, but if not “Strong”, it must either specify at least one 5+ card suit, or maximum of two possible 5+ card one-suiters.

### 7 C 3 *Notes*

- (1) In all cases players should explain their method by at least stating:
  - HCP range or equivalent expression of hand strength
  - Minimum length of longest suit(s)
  - Forcing or not
- (2) Apart from natural single-suiters and a strong balanced 2NT, all other openings (from 2♣ to 3♠ inclusive) are alertable.
- (3) It is the responsibility of the pair alerting and explaining to be clear whether or not their agreement conforms to the definition of “Strong”, especially when using terms such as “Benji” or “8 playing tricks” which otherwise may well be understood to show a strong hand.

Pairs whose agreements do combine a “Strong” opening bid with weaker hands should be clear which suits are possible in the non-strong options. For example, a 2♣ opening might be described as ‘Either a strong hand or eight playing tricks in a major’; in this case the major suit options do not have to satisfy the rule in 5D1(b) as they are permitted under 7C1(c)(i).
- (4) Pairs that deviate from the “Strong” requirements above will usually be considered to have done so by agreement unless they can demonstrate otherwise.

### 7 D *Opening Bids of 3NT and higher*

These may have any agreed meaning.

### 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 any jump cue bid or for any bid of 3NT or higher.



## 7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

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Any bid which shows at least four cards in a specified suit is permitted.

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

Any bid which shows a strong hand (see 5D1(b)) 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) Any single meaning permitted for an opening bid of 1NT (see 7B3), or
- (b) A take-out bid (similar to a take-out double) of any agreed strength, or
- (c) \**Either* a hand with at least 14 HCP that would be permitted to open a natural 1NT 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) A strong hand (see 5D1(b)), 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 a strong (see 5D1(b)) 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 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 such situations subject to full disclosure.

### 7 F 3 *Specific Cases*

The following signals (i.e. when following suit) are **not** permitted:

- (a) Signals which make use both of the rank (high/low or high/middle/low) and the parity (even/odd) of the card played.
- (b) Signals which assign a meaning to specific pips (e.g. 6 or 7 encouraging, other cards suit preference).

Such meanings are permitted for discards.

## 8 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: OTHER PERMISSIONS

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### 8 A *Introduction*

8 A 1 The EBU no longer runs events at Level 3. However, clubs and County Associations may wish to run events with permitted understandings in line with the old Level 3, particularly for the restrictions on artificial pre-emptive openings. 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 a strong hand (see 5D1(b)), or
- (b) Any meaning or meanings which show at least five 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♦*

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 16 HCP. 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 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

## 8 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: OTHER PERMISSIONS

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(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 a strong hand (see 5D1(b)), 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

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### 9 A *Introduction*

9 A 1 At Level 5 any understanding is allowed that is either

- (a) permitted at EBU Level 4 (even if categorised as 'HUM' or 'Brown Sticker' by the WBF), or
- (b) not forbidden under sections 9A2, 9A3 and 9A4 below. These are adapted from the WBF system regulations for 'Category 3' events (additions are in square brackets).

Full details of the WBF system regulations are not necessary to understand Level 5 permissions, but can be found at <http://www.worldbridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/WBFSystemsPolicy.pdf>

9 A 2 *Highly Unusual Methods (HUMs)*

[Highly Unusual Methods may not be played]. For the purpose of this Policy, a Highly Unusual Method (HUM) means any System that exhibits one or more of the following features:

- (a) By partnership agreement an opening call of Pass shows at least the values generally accepted for an opening bid of one, even if there are alternative weak possibilities
- (b) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level may be weaker than Pass
- (c) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level may be made with 7 HCP or less
- (d) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level shows either three cards or more, or two cards or less in a specified suit
- (e) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level shows either three cards or more in one specified suit or three cards or more in another. **EXCEPTION:** one of a minor in a strong club or strong diamond system.

9 A 3 *Other agreements and treatments*

The following conventions or treatments are categorised as 'Brown Sticker' [and may not be played, unless they are permitted at EBU Level 4]:

- (a) Any opening bid of two clubs through three spades that:
  - (i) could be made on 9 HCP or less AND
  - (ii) does not promise at least four cards in a known suit.

**EXCEPTION:**

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 with 13 HCP or more.

(**Explanation:** Where all the weak meanings show at least four cards in one known suit, and the strong meanings show a hand with 13 HCP or more, it is not a Brown Sticker Convention [and the bid is permitted].)

- (b) An overcall of a natural opening bid of one of a suit that does not promise at least four cards in a known suit.

EXCEPTION: A natural overcall in no trumps.

EXCEPTION: any cue bid suit that shows a strong hand.

EXCEPTION: a jump cue bid in opponent's known suit that asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in that 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 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 5

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- (e) None of the foregoing restrictions pertain to conventional defences against forcing, artificial opening bids or defences against 'Brown Sticker' or HUM conventions.

[WBF regulations also state that an opening bid of one club which may be made on a doubleton or singleton club and which is ostensibly natural and non-forcing should be regarded as natural and not artificial. This is NOT the case at EBU Level 5; such openings are permitted (at EBU Level 4) but are considered artificial and hence any defence is permitted.]

### 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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## 10 ONLINE [Not Printed]

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### **10 A**      *Disclosure of Systems*

#### 10 A 1      *System cards*

Pairs should have a system card online, which should be available to opponents during the round; if the system card is not on the platform (for instance, on RealBridge), pairs should provide the opponents with a link to the system card, each round. The system card should include agreements for bidding and carding.

In the absence of an online system card, the pair should 'pre-announce' at the beginning of each round – this should include basic bidding system and carding arrangements.

Players may consult their own system card and other (system) notes at any stage. Players may not make notes during the auction and play.

#### 10 A 2      *Alerting and announcing*

EBU events on BBO and RealBridge use 'self-alerting' – players alert their own calls, not their partner's. (Events on RealBridge with 'partner-alerting' should follow the face-to-face alerting and announcing procedures in section 4.)

A player should alert any call that would be alerted or announced (by partner), as defined in section 4. Opening bids which are unexpected are alerted – including (potential) canapé and 'always unbalanced'.

Above 3NT, the rules in 4B4 do not apply for alerting bids and passes: bids and passes above 3NT should continue to be alerted if artificial or unexpected.

However, doubles and redoubles above 3NT need only be alerted if required by 4B4 (c) + (d).

Players must alert even if the pair have a system card uploaded.

Players should provide a short explanation with the alert – like a face-to-face announcement – before making the call

#### 10 A 3      *Asking questions*

Whether or not a call was alerted, and whether or not an explanation was provided, an opponent can request a (fuller) explanation by private 'chat' to the playing making the call – players should not assume that the initial self-announcement/explanation is a complete description.

It should not be necessary to ask the partner of the player making a call to explain the call. Players are not allowed to try to establish if the other side are having a misunderstanding.

If the opponents ask such a question, in the first instance, the partner should (politely) point out that the original player should answer the question. If the opponents insist that the partner answer questions, then the TD should be called. If there is no TD (e.g. in a match 'played privately'), the players will have to achieve a resolution that allows the hand to continue, by open discussion (via 'Table' chat), and reserve their rights.

#### 10 A 4      *Players correcting their own misexplanations*

It is possible to give the wrong explanation, even when players are explaining their own calls. It is possible that the explanation will be a description of the player's hand but not the correct explanation according to the partnership agreements. This can occur if the player forgets the system, or if they 'misclick' and do not make their intended call.

The opponents are entitled to a correct explanation of the agreement. If the player giving the explanation becomes aware of their error, then they must correct the explanation. Law 20F4 allows the correction to be made in Clarification Period, but online, the duration of this is controlled only by the opening leader, and the correction needs to be available to the



defenders before the opening lead. On the other hand, to correct the explanation during the auction may create unauthorised information due to delays.

The suggested procedure is for the player who knows that his explanation is incorrect, is to replace the incorrect explanation with 'WRONG explanation' as soon as possible, and later (if requested) give the correct explanation to the opponents, making it clear that this is the explanation of their agreements, not the player's intended meaning.

### 10 A 5 *BBO robots: agreements and explanations*

When robots are playing on BBO, the explanations of the calls of both members of the partnership (robot or human) are provided by the platform: the explanation of the call made by a human playing with a robot is not the human player's explanation.

The robots will try to make the right call and will also provide an explanation, but the call will not always match the explanation. A player playing with a robot may choose to make a call which does not match the explanation that the robot will give. Such departures from the robots 'announced understandings' are legal, as they cannot lead to an implicit understanding.

If a player makes a call knowing that it does not match the explanation, and the player does not want inexperienced opponents to be misled by the explanation, the player can tell the opponents (in 'table' chat) that the explanation was not the player's intended meaning.

### **10 B** *Advice for Players*

#### 10 B 1 *Communication (Law 73)*

It is possible to communicate to 'the table' – visible to all players at the table; or to one opponent – visible only to that opponent. It may be possible (on some platforms) to send a message to both opponents, but a reply from one opponent will not be seen by the other opponent. It is possible to communicate privately with partner between rounds.

General questions about general bidding methods and carding agreements can be addressed to all at the table so that either opponent can answer, and all can see the answers.

Specific questions about particular calls should be via the alert/announcement mechanism (in which case both members of the opposing pair will see any revised explanation), or through private message to the opponent making the bid.

#### 10 B 2 *Illegal communication*

Illegal communication is cheating and is not allowed.

Do not communicate anything to partner in public which may influence their choice of calls or plays (Law 73B1).

Do not communicate with partner during the round in any way which is not visible to the opponents: Law 73B2 'The gravest possible offence is for a partnership to exchange information through prearranged methods of communication other than those sanctioned by these Laws'.

#### 10 B 3 *Skip bids on BBO*

There is no online STOP card or other skip bid warning. Following a jump bid (i.e. a bid at a higher level than the minimum in that denomination), the next player should pause before making their call. If a player is consistent in their length of pause in these positions, a similar pause will usually not be considered to constitute unauthorised information. Otherwise, a break in tempo will be judged by comparison with the player's habitual actions.

As there is no skip bid warning, inexperienced online players will inevitably sometimes call quickly over a jump bid. Although this is not correct procedure, and in principle this variation

## 10 ONLINE

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in tempo can create unauthorised information, the limitations of the online playing environment mean that it is not expected that such violations will be automatically penalised.

### 10 B 4 *'Auto-play singletons' on BBO*

BBO has an option to auto-play singletons – where a player has no choice of play, the card is played immediately. Selecting this option is not consistent with maintaining a steady tempo (Law 73D1); this is true whether or not the player also has selected the option to confirm plays. This option is an (avoidable) way of creating unauthorised information. This option should not be used in teams matches and EBU games - except perhaps in 'fast' games.

### 10 C **Online laws**

#### 10 C 1 *Unintended calls and plays (Law 25A, Law 45D1(b) (b))*

BBO and RealBridge allow for calls and plays to be withdrawn on the request of the player, and with the agreement of the opponents: called an 'UNDO'. This facility can be restricted by the tournament organiser.

- (a) In all EBU events, there are no UNDOs in the play.
- (b) UNDOs are allowed in all EBU events in the auction for genuine 'misclicks' – a 'misclick' corresponds to a 'mechanical error', see Law 25A2.
- (c) The spirit of the time limit on corrections in Law 25A (until partner makes a call) applies – the player should not request an UNDO if they have seen partner's subsequent call, but the UNDO request may appear to the other players after they see the partner's call.
- (d) UNDOs are allowed even if partner has called as long as 'the situation has not got completely out of hand' – all other players have called or the opening lead has been made.
- (e) The TD should be called if there is a request for an UNDO in the auction, and the situation is at all unclear.
- (f) If the other side accept the request for an UNDO (without calling the TD) they will usually be deemed to have accepted the replacement call (Law 25B1: the second call stands and the auction continues).

#### 10 C 2 *Claims on BBO (Law 68, Law 69, Law 70, Law 71)*

- (a) If there is a claim and the opponents object, play continues, but the claim may be subject to adjudication (Law 68D2 does not apply)
- (b) The opponent can object by calling the TD. If the claimer has adopted a line not obvious in the original claim statement, or which seems to have been informed by the objection to the claim, the TD will rule in accordance with Law 70 on Contested Claims – rather than rule as if the players had agreed to play on after a claim.
- (c) If there is a claim (which has not been accepted) and the round ends (and play is curtailed), then the TD will rule on the claim using Law 70, as if the opponents had objected to the claim. The opponents may need to call the TD after the round, to request a ruling.
- (d) If there is claim and the claim is accepted but the opponents subsequently disagree, the TD will apply Law 69B.
- (e) If one defender concedes and the other objects but the declarer accepts the claim/concession, then play ceases – there is no option for play to continue. In this case, or any case where one side object to their side conceding tricks, the TD will apply Law 71.