

BLUE BOOK

HANDBOOK OF
EBU
PERMITTED UNDERSTANDINGS

Revised with amendments 2023



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EBU
PERMITTED UNDERSTANDINGS

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of the English Bridge Union

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Contents

1 GENERAL	4
1 A Introduction	4
1 B Contacts	4
1 C Following published regulations	4
1 D Glossary: definitions and links	4
2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM	5
2 A General	5
2 B Questions and Explanations: General (Law 20, Law 41B)	5
2 C Disclosure of carding methods	6
2 D When things go wrong	6
2 E Unauthorised Information	7
3 SYSTEM CARDS	8
3 A General	8
3 B Types of system card	8
3 C Naming of partnership understandings	8
3 D Matters of style	8
3 E One of a Minor Opening Bids	9
3 F One No Trump Opening Bids	9
3 G 'Multi'	9
3 H Doubles	9
3 J Leads, signals and discards	10
3 K Matters to which special attention should be drawn	10
3 L Inadequate Information	10
3 M Bidding Boxes	11
4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING	12
4 A General	12
4 B Basic alerting rules	12
4 C 'Natural' bids and passes	13
4 D Announcements – 1 of a suit openings and responses	13
4 E Announcements – NT Openings/Overcalls and Responses	14
4 F Announcements – Two of a Suit Openings	15
4 G Announcements – proxy calls, including transfers	15
4 H Specific Cases	15
5 RULES FOR PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS	17
5 A Basic	17

Contents

5 B	Levels	17
5 C	Definitions	17
5 D	Example of 'Rule of 19'	17
5 E	Variations	18
5 F	Regulation of natural bids	18
6	PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 2	19
6 A	Introduction	19
6 B	General	19
6 C	One Level Openings	19
6 D	Two Level Opening Bids	19
6 E	Other Conventional Openings	19
6 F	Defensive Bidding	19
6 G	Defending against 1NT	20
6 H	Leads, Signals and Discards	20
7	PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4	21
7 A	General	21
7 B	One Level Openings	21
7 C	Opening Bids from 2♣ to 3♠ inclusive	21
7 D	Opening Bids of 3NT and higher	22
7 E	Defence to Opening Bids in Second (Direct) Seat	23
7 F	Carding	23
8	PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 5	25
8 A	Introduction	25
8 B	Carding	25
9	ONLINE	26
9 A	Disclosure of Systems	26
9 B	Advice for Players	27
9 C	Online laws	28
	GLOSSARY	30
	INDEX	32

1 General

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.

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.

This book is effective from 7th August 2023.

David Burn

Chairman, Laws and Ethics Committee

Stephen Green

Vice Chairman, Laws and Ethics Committee

1 B **Contacts**

The L&E committee welcomes comments, queries, or corrections at any time; please address them to the 'Blue Book' email or to the Secretary of the Committee.

The Secretary
Laws and Ethics Committee
English Bridge Union
Broadfields
Bicester Road
AYLESBURY HP19 8AZ

Telephone:	01296 317219	From outside UK: +44 1296 317219
Secretary Email:	lecsec@ebu.co.uk	
Blue Book Email:	bluebook@ebu.co.uk	
EBU web site:	http://www.ebu.co.uk	
L&EC page:	http://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics	

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 resources 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.

1 D **Glossary: definitions and links**

There is a [Glossary](#). When the use of a word depends on the definition in the Glossary, the word is underlined in blue and clicking on the word links to the definition.

2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

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. Section 9 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**). A player who is uncertain whether the regulations require an alert, but believes it would help the opponents, 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 A 4 Terms in the [Glossary](#) should be used for disclosure where possible. However do not use them if the partnership agreements do not match the usage defined in the Glossary.

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. A player who knows that there are multiple possible meanings for a call 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 call 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 words such as 'standard', 'normal' and 'natural' to describe partnership carding agreements should be avoided, as they 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, the question should simply be 'What does that call mean?'

2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

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 partner's explanation 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 A player must alert (or announce) unless the player knows that partner's call is not alertable (or announceable). When asked for the meaning of the call, the player if unsure may refer the opponents to the system card if the meaning is shown there. If there is genuinely no partnership understanding or relevant experience with similar auctions, the player must not invent one, for example by saying "I am taking this as..." but rather explain that there is no agreement. 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 the call, there are three possibilities:

- (a) The player realises that partner's alert or explanation is correct, and the player has misbid
- (b) The player is confident of having made the correct call, and that partner's alert or explanation is wrong
- (c) The player is unsure which member of the partnership is correct.

2 D 4 Misbids arise in different ways, such as if a player forgets the partnership 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. A player who has misbid, and realises it, must continue to alert where necessary, and explain, if asked, partner's calls solely on the basis of the player's belief as to the actual partnership understandings.

2 D 5 A player who believes that it is possible partner has misalerted or given a wrong explanation must call the TD and explain the situation at the appropriate time (**Law 75B**):

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

2 DISCLOSURE OF SYSTEM

- 2 D 6 A player who has given an incorrect or incomplete explanation, or has not alerted correctly, must on realising the situation call the TD to explain. The player must do this before the opening lead but may do so earlier. **(Law 20F4(a))**
- 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 Players may misbid after forgetting a partnership understanding. A player who realises that partner has done so must continue to call and play as if in ignorance of the mistake, until it becomes obvious from the auction or play that something is amiss. **(Law 73C)**
- 2 D 9 If a player's partner has given an incorrect or incomplete explanation, alerted or failed to alert incorrectly, or made an incorrect announcement, the player must not take any advantage of this unauthorised information. The player must not choose any call or play suggested by knowledge that there may be a problem with the auction, either through realisation that partner's bidding may be wrong, or because of uncertainty over which member of the partnership 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. **(Law 47E2)**

2 E *Unauthorised Information*

- 2 E 1 A player whose turn it is to call or play has the right to ask questions, but if a player shows unusual interest in one or more calls, this may give rise to unauthorised information. Partner must avoid taking advantage. It may be in a player's interests to defer questions until either the player is about to make the opening lead or partner's lead is face-down on the table .
- 2 E 2 A player may use only information 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 partner's explanation, uncertainty, tempo or mannerisms. **(Law 73B1)**. A player may not ask a question solely for 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 wishes to ask a question, they should avoid passing unauthorised information. For example when asking about a 1♣ opening bid say, "What does 1♣ mean?", rather than, "Does that really show clubs?"

3 SYSTEM CARDS

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.
- (d) Playing online, if the platform provides its own system card facility that system card may be used.

3 B 2 Computer-produced versions of system cards must contain the same information in substantially the same layout and in a similar size. Online versions of systems cards should be used on platforms which do not have a system card facility; for instance, by providing opponents with a link to the system card at the start of each round. See the [System Card utility on My EBU](#).

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 opening pre-empt. 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♣ / 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 low (non-honour) singleton must prominently disclose this. They must state when a low singleton may be expected. Such 1NT openings must be specifically announced, see [4E1](#).

3 G *'Multi'*

The term 'Multi' should not be used in isolation. Multi-way bids should be explained on a system card and in explanations by describing the meanings.

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 [4B2](#).

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 doubler's hand and the auction so far, that the best result on the board will be obtained by defending the doubled contract. Partner is expected to pass, unless holding a hand very unsuitable for defence in the context of the expected range of holdings in the auction so far.

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.

3 H 3 *Take-out doubles*

A take-out double suggests that the doubler wishes to compete in one or more suits other than the suit doubled. Partner is expected to bid, though a pass may be made on a hand very suitable for defence in the context of the expected range of holdings in the auction so far .

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.

3 SYSTEM CARDS

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

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

The 2023 Blue Book contains significant changes to announcements and alerting of doubles. The purpose of announcing and alerting is that opponents are properly informed. When players get the details wrong – alerting when they should announce, or announcing when they should not – opponents should be tolerant.

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. A player who is uncertain whether the regulations require an alert, but believes it would help the opponents, 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 call makes a statement about the bidder's hand.

Announcements:

- only apply on the [first round of bidding](#)
- apply equally over intervention
- never apply to overcalls
- should be extended to give a better description of the partnership understanding e.g. "good 11-14", particularly when there is an unexpected element e.g. "always invitational values"
- must be the same description whenever the same call is made by either partner

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) if they believe that it may be required.

4 A 6 If there is no alert and no announcement for a call that always requires one (see [2A3](#)):

- Opponents may ask the meaning of the call without giving rise to unauthorised information (see [2E1](#)); and
- Failure to ask may be considered failure to protect one's side from damage due to misinformation

If there is no alert and no announcement for a call that sometimes (depending on its agreed meaning) requires one:

- Opponents should assume that the call does not require either.

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 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

4 B 2 *Doubles*

Doubles by [responder](#) and [advancer](#) on the [first round of bidding](#) are to be announced if they are a [proxy](#) for another suit, see [4G2](#).

Otherwise, doubles are only to be alerted in the following situations:

- i. A double of a natural 1NT opening bid that (a) is not for penalty; or (b) may be based on a balanced hand with less than 15HCP
- ii. A penalty double on the [first round of bidding](#) of a shown suit
- iii. A penalty double on the [first round of bidding](#) of a 1NT response
- iv. Any double that has an unexpected specific message, e.g. relating to another suit, or number of controls, weakness in bid suit

Take-out doubles of [pass-or-correct](#) bids on the [first round of bidding](#) are not alerted.

4 B 3 *Redoubles*

Redoubles on the [first round of bidding](#) that are a [proxy](#) for another suit are to be announced, see [4G2](#). A redouble to show nothing other than general strength or a desire to play this contract is not alertable. All other redoubles are alerted.

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 bidding](#)
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 and redoubles above 3NT follow the same rules as [4B2](#) and [4B3](#).

For online bridge, with self-alerts, there are different rules for bids and passes above 3NT, see [9A2](#).

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 convey values or specify suit holdings.

4 D *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

4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

suit". The announcement may be altered in line with the partnership understanding, for example "May be two, with up to 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 and any opening which is **unconditionally forcing**.

4 D 2 In response to a non-forcing one of a suit opening bid or overcall:

- A non-forcing 1NT response that can be made on more than 10 HCP is announced. Partner 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"). The announcement is extended to include "could be very weak", "could be a three-card raise", as appropriate; or amended by stating the agreed range.
- A forcing 1NT response that does not show specific suit or suits is announced. Partner says "Forcing".

4 D 3 In response to a non-forcing 1♣ opening bid:

- if 1♠ denies a four card or longer major, partner says "No major".

4 D 4 A response which shows another suit is announced: see [4G2](#).

4 D 5 In response to a non-forcing one of a suit opening bid or overcall, a new suit without a jump that is natural and forcing to game is announced. Partner says "Game-forcing".

4 D 6 In response to a non-forcing suit opening bid or overcall, at any level:

- A new suit jump response which is natural and forcing is announced. Partner says "strong, game-forcing" or "strong, forcing".
- A non-game new suit response which is natural and non-forcing is announced unless [responder/advancer](#) has previously passed or bids over a natural NT intervention. Partner says "natural, non-forcing".

A response that is natural but also shows support for suit bid by partner is alerted.

4 E *Announcements – NT Openings/Overcalls and Responses*

4 E 1 A natural 1NT opening is 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 low (non-honour) singleton, it is announced by stating the range followed by "may contain a singleton".

A natural 2NT opening and natural NT overcalls are not announced.

4 E 2 A Stayman 2♣ bid is announced in response to a natural 1NT opening or direct 1NT overcall, only where it is used to ask for a four-card major. Partner 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 are alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it *shows* a four-card major.

If a Stayman 2♣ bid is at least invitational, the announcement is extended with "at least invitational".

4 E 3 A Stayman 3♣ bid is announced, in response to a natural 2NT opening (or a direct 2NT overcall), only where it is used to ask for a four-card major. Partner 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 are alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it *shows* a four-card major.

4 E 4 Transfer and other [proxy](#) calls by [responder](#) or [advancer](#) are announced, see [4G2](#).

4 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

4 E 5 Natural non-forcing non-game suit responses (for example, a ‘weakness take-out’) are announced. Partner says “natural, non-forcing”.

Natural forcing suit responses are announced. Partner says “natural, forcing”.

(All non-game suit responses are announced or alerted.)

4 F *Announcements – Two of a Suit Openings*

4 F 1 A natural one-suited 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 one-suited. 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, one-suited and 5+ cards) or alerted (otherwise).

4 G *Announcements – proxy calls, including transfers*

4 G 1 Examples of [proxy](#) calls include:

- red-suit transfers to a major, 1♣ - 1♦/1♥ and 1NT - 2♦/2♥ showing the next suit;
- South African Texas, 1NT/2NT - 4♣/4♦ showing the corresponding major;
- Kaplan Inversion (Granville), 1♥ - 1NT showing spades.
- 1♣/1♦ - (1♥/1♠) – Double showing 4+ cards in the other major (and saying nothing about other suits)

4 G 2 [Proxy](#) calls are announced where they are on the [first round](#) by [responder](#) or [advancer](#) and the suit shown is at least 4 cards if the proxy call is at the 1-level, or at least 5 cards otherwise. Partner names the suit shown.

Proxy opening bids and overcalls (e.g. transfer pre-empts) are alerted, not announced.

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 4E). For example:
- (1) In response to a balancing 1NT overcall
 - (2) Opener’s rebid of 2♦ in response to a 2♣ enquiry or 3♦ in response to a 3♣ enquiry where the enquiry was not announceable
 - (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 ALERTING AND ANNOUNCING

- (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 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 which is forcing
- (b) The first bid in a potential canapé sequence, whereby partnership agreement the shorter suit in any specific two-suited hand is always bid first (for example, if 1♠ is the systemic opening with four spades and a longer minor, but the longer major is opened with both majors, 1♠ 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
 - (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 minimum suit response to a take-out double, with the next hand passing, that shows values
- (e) 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)
- (f) 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
- (g) 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.
- (h) After a 2♣ Stayman response, a 2NT or 3NT rebid by [responder](#) or [advancer](#) which does not promise a major

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

- (a) Any announceable call
- (b) Calls above 3NT unless specified as alertable in [4B4](#), or online (see [9A2](#))
- (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\(f\)](#))

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 evaluate the strength of a hand using any method ([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 18/19/20](#)' and '[Strong](#)'.

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 provide each of the opponents with a system card for each different system (that is, two copies of each system card). Each system card must indicate when the card applies.

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 *Levels*

When levels of permitted understandings were given numbers, there were 5 levels:

Levels 2, 4 and 5 are defined in sections 6, 7 and 8.

Level 1 corresponds to 'Simple Systems', described in the White Book section 1.9.

Level 3 is described in [Blue Book Level 3](#).

5 C *Definitions*

'[High card points \(HCP\)](#)', '[Rule of 18 or 19 or 20](#)', and '[Strong](#)' are defined in the [Glossary](#).

5 D *Example of 'Rule of 19'*

	♠ 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':	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

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.

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](#).

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, meet the definition of [strong](#) – part (a).

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

(a) Natural, one [meaning](#) with 5+ cards in the suit opened

(b) Any [strong](#) hand

(c) A three-suited hand with a specified shortage and opening bid strength

Notes:

- A 2NT opening must always be [strong](#)
- Multi-way 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

- (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 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

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](#) 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 must be natural.

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

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](#)
- (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
- (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*

General - Permitted

- Any number of [strong meanings](#)
- One non-strong [meaning](#) that shows the bid suit. This may be combined with any number of strong meanings, but no other non-strong meanings.
- One or two artificial [meanings](#) that do not specify the suit opened. These may be combined with any number of strong meanings.

7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

Non-Strong Permitted Meanings

a) Showing the suit

Length of x	Permitted
0-2	No – does not show the suit
3	Only if satisfies Rule of 20
4	Only if second suit is also specified, or satisfies Rule of 20
5+	Any

b) Artificial – 1 suiter

Any 5+ suit except the suit opened is permitted

c) Artificial - 2 suiter

Any [meaning](#) may have only 4 cards in one or both suits if it satisfies the Rule of 20.

In addition the following are permitted if weaker than Rule of 20:

Number of Specified Suits	Permitted if weaker than Rule of 20
0	Yes if both suits are 5+. Neither suit can be the suit opened
1	Yes, specified suit must be 5+ and not be the suit opened. Second, non-specified suit, can be 4, and include the suit opened.
2	Yes, can be 4-4, but neither suit can be the suit opened

d) Artificial – 3 suiter – 4441/5440/5431

By definition all 3 suits are known as they do not include the suit opened. Any strength is permitted if 4441 or 5440. If 5431 it must satisfy the Rule of 20.

7 C 2

2NT Opening

General – Permitted

- Any number of [strong meanings](#)
- Two non-strong [meanings](#) if both specify the same 5+ card suit; else a single non-strong [meaning](#)
- A combination of the above

Non-Strong Permitted Meanings

- Any one suited hand
- Any two-suited [meaning](#) may have only 4 cards in one or both suits if it satisfies the Rule of 20.

In addition the following are permitted if weaker than Rule of 20:

Number of Specified Suits	Permitted if weaker than Rule of 20
0	Yes if both suits are 5+
1	Yes, specified suit must be 5+ Second, non-specified suit, can be 4
2	Yes, can be 4-4

A three-suiter must specify the short suit. Any strength is permitted if 4441 or 5440. If 5431 it must satisfy the Rule of 20.

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

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 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, 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](#) 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 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

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: LEVEL 5

8 A *Introduction*

8 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 [8A2](#), [8A3](#) and [8A4](#) below. These are adapted from the WBF system regulations for 'Category 3' events.

Full details of the WBF system regulations are not necessary to understand Level 5, but can be found at <http://www.worldbridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WBFSYSTEMSPOLICY.PDF>

8 A 2 *Highly Unusual Methods (HUMs)*

[Highly Unusual Methods](#) may not be played, unless they are permitted at EBU Level 4.

8 A 3 *Other agreements and treatments*

Conventions or treatments categorised as '[Brown Sticker](#)' may not be played, unless they are permitted at EBU Level 4.

8 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.

8 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](#).

9 ONLINE

9 A *Disclosure of Systems*

9 A 1 *System cards*

Pairs should have a system card online, including agreements for bidding and carding. If the platform does not provide access to the system card, and it was not made available in advance, pairs should provide the opponents with a link to the system card each round.

In the absence of an online system card, a pair playing simple methods should 'pre-announce' (orally, or by written chat) 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.

9 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](#).)

Players should 'alert' by providing a short explanation of the call before making the call – it is not necessary to click the Alert button or Alert strip. Failing that, players can click the Alert button (on BBO) or the Alert strip (on RealBridge), make the call, and then click on the call and add the short explanation.

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: bids and passes above 3NT should continue to be alerted if artificial or unexpected.

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

9 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.

9 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 for a player aware of having given an incorrect explanation is: to replace, or append to, the incorrect explanation with 'WRONG explanation' as soon as possible; to give on request the correct explanation to the opponents, making it clear that this is the explanation of the partnership agreements, not the player's intended meaning.

9 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 the robot'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 wants to avoid inexperienced opponents being misled by the explanation, the player can tell the opponents (in 'table' chat) that the explanation was not the player's intended meaning.

9 B *Advice for Players*

9 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.

9 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'.

Note Other methods of communication are illegal whether they are 'prearranged' or not.

9 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

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.

9 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 – except perhaps in 'fast' games.

9 B 5 *Enforced pauses on RealBridge*

RealBridge implements the STOP procedure by generating a STOP warning when there is a skip bid, and the next player cannot bid until the STOP warning is replaced by the bidding box. The next player cannot bid quickly. A pause beyond the pause enforced by the platform can create unauthorised information.

The tournament organiser can choose to have enforced pauses in the auction (for dealer, for the first round and for subsequent rounds) and in the play (opening lead, first play from dummy, and first play by third hand). There is always an enforced delay for the first call by the dealer of at least two seconds. The player to act cannot make call or play until the enforced pause is complete.

9 C *Online laws*

9 C 1 *Unintended calls and plays (Law 25A, Law 45C4(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, except in cases of misinformation.
- (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).
- (g) If there is an UNDO request for a genuine unintended call but the platform has reached the point where the change of call is no longer possible, the director rules that it is too late to change the call and the result stands - there is no score adjustment.
(This happens on BBO if a board is passed out despite an UNDO request, the platform moves on to the next board, and the board which was passed out cannot be replayed.)
- (h) It is an offence to call once an UNDO request has been made.

9 ONLINE

If the TD is called for cases of misinformation and the TD rules that a call (Law 21B1 (a)) or play (Law 47E2 (a)) may be changed, the TD will instruct the player to request and UNDO and instruct the other side to accept.

9 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.

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.

GLOSSARY

Advancer	Partner of the player who makes the first action (bid or double) for the defensive side.
Alert	To draw to the opponents' attention a call by partner that may have a conventional or unexpected meaning.
Announcement	A verbal statement about the meaning of a call by partner.
Artificial	Calls that convey information other than (or in addition to) a willingness to play in the denomination named or last named.
Balanced/unbalanced	Distributions [4432], [4333], [5332], [5422] and [6322] are balanced; all other distributions are unbalanced
Brown Sticker	Brown Sticker system classification may be found here: WBF Systems Policy
Forcing	A call which cannot be passed (as a matter of partnership understanding).
First round of bidding	The first bid and the next three calls
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.
Highly unusual methods (HUM)	Any System that exhibits one or more of the following features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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.
Intermediate	(2-level opening bid) 10 - 15 HCP
Intervention	(Over an opening bid or overcall) a double or bid. 'no intervention' means the next hand passed over the opening bid/overcall.
Meaning	A "meaning" describes the type of hand in terms of either balanced or unbalanced, and its strength. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced meanings need specify no suits. • Unbalanced meanings must specify the number of suits and contain at most one unspecified suit.
Multi	(No definition, "multi" should not be used, see 3G)
Natural (suit bid)	Calls that that show 3+ cards in the suit and don't have an artificial meaning are considered natural.
Natural 1NT opening	A natural 1NT opening has no more than nine cards in two suits, no void, and does not have seven hearts or seven spades.
Pass-or-correct	A bid of one of the suits that partner might have (having shown a 6-card major, for example); partner is expected to PASS or correct to the suit held.
Penalty double	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.
Proxy	A call which shows a single specified suit - which is not a suit previously bid naturally
Puppet	A call requiring partner to make a certain call at their next turn.
Responder	Partner of the player who makes the opening bid

GLOSSARY

Rule of [18 or 19 or 20]	Determined by adding the HCP to the sum of the number of cards in the two longest suits.
Self-alert	To draw the opponents' attention to one's own call that may have a conventional or unusual [unexpected] meaning.
Strong	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 in two suits containing 10+ cards. The rule for strong, in (b), is also used for artificial overcalls.
Take-out double	A take-out double suggests that the doubler wishes to compete and invites partner to describe his hand. Partner is expected to bid.
Three-suited-hand	A hand with 5440, 5431 or 4441 distribution.
Transfer	A call showing length in a different suit and asking partner to bid the suit.
Unauthorised information	Information given to partner by means other than a legal call or play; see Law 16.
Weak	(2-level opening bid) up to 10 HCP

INDEX

Agreement.....	5, 8, 10, 13, 17, 20
Agreements, naming	8
Alerting	
basic rules.....	12
calls above 3NT.....	13, 16, 26
doubles.....	13
passes and bids.....	12
redoubles.....	13
specific cases	15
Stayman.....	15
transfers	15
Alerting and announcing: purpose	12
Announcements	12
1NT openings.....	14
Stayman.....	14
two of a suit openings.....	15
wording	14
Basic alerting rules.....	12
Basic system	17
Calls above 3NT	13, 16, 26
Carding methods	6
Change of unintended call.....	11
Completion of transfer	16
Contact details.....	4
Defence to natural one of a suit openings	23
Different styles	8
Doubles.....	9
alerting	13
style.....	8
unusual meaning.....	9
Dual meaning signals.....	24
Encrypted carding.....	23
Forcing	5
Forcing raises.....	16
<i>Ghestem</i>	8
Hands fewer than 8 high card points	25
HCP	17
High Card Points	17
Highly Unusual Methods	25
Implicit understandings	5
Inadequate information	10
Intermediate.....	15
Lead-directing passes	13
Leads, signals and discards.....	6, 10
Legal control of non-conventional bids.....	18
Level 2.....	17, 19
Level 4.....	17, 21
Level 5.....	8, 17, 25
Light openings	8
Losing Trick Count	17
Matters of style.....	8
Misinformation	5
Modified	8
Naming of agreements	8
Natural	5
for alerting purposes	13
no trump bids	13
passes	13
suit bids	13
No agreement.....	6
No trump bids.....	13
Normal	5
One No Trump openings.....	9, 14
One of a minor openings	9
Opening Points (Rule of 19 etc.).....	17
Passes.....	13
Passing a forcing bid	5
Penalty doubles	9, 20
Playing tricks	17
Potentially unexpected meaning.....	12
Pre-emptive raises	16
Protecting yourself	5
Questions and explanations	5
Random.....	6, 17, 25
Redoubles, alerting.....	13
Regulations, compliance with.....	4
Singletons in 1NT openings.....	9, 14
Standard.....	5
<i>Stayman</i>	14, 15
Stop procedure	11
Strong.....	19, 20, 21, 22, 23
1♣ or 1♦.....	19, 21
forcing.....	15
non-forcing	15
two-suited	20, 23
Supplementary questions.....	5, 26
System cards	
EBU 20B.....	8, 10
WBF card	8
Take-out doubles	9, 16
Transfers	15
Two different systems	17
Two of a suit openings.....	15
Two-suited overcalls.....	8
Unauthorised information.....	6, 7, 11
Variations	
permitted agreements, to	18
position and/or vulnerability.....	17
When things go wrong.....	6