



Standard English Acol

Foundation Level System File 2019



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Basic System

Acro with a 12-14 1NT, 4 card majors and weak two openers

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SECTION ONE

The Uncontested Auction

Balanced hands

A balanced hand is one that contains no singleton or void and not more than one doubleton. The possible distributions are 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 and 5-3-3-2, the suits being listed in any order.

Table of bids and rebids

Points	Opening bid
12-14	1NT (can include any five card suit)
15-16	one of a suit and rebid no trumps at the lowest level
17-18	one of a suit and single jump rebid in no trumps on the next round
19	one of a suit and jump to 3NT on the next round
20-22	2NT
23-24	2♣ and rebid no trumps at the lowest level
25-27	2♣ and rebid 3NT
28-30	2♣ and rebid 4NT

1.1 Opening 1NT

All balanced hands in the 12-14 range are opened 1NT. That includes hands with a five card major in a 5-3-3-2 shape.

Responses on balanced hands

Points	Response	Next
0-10	Pass	
11-12	With no interest in a 4-4 major suit fit, bid 2NT to invite game	Opener bids 3NT or passes
13-18	Raise to 3NT;	Opener must pass
19-20	Raise to 4NT; quantitative invite	Opener passes with minimum, bids 6NT with maximum
21-24	Raise to 6NT;	Opener must pass
25+	Raise to 7NT	

Response of 2♣ (The Stayman convention)

This is used on hands where responder wishes to investigate a 4-4 fit in a major suit and on *some* weaker hands seeking to improve the contract.

Over Stayman 2♣ opener rebids:

- 2♦ no 4-card major
- 2♥ 4 hearts, possibly 4 spades
- 2♠ 4 spades, not 4 hearts

Continuations by responder – weak options (0-10 points)

The weak options are:

- at least 5-4 in the majors
- long diamonds and support for both majors

- at least six clubs

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/2♠

5-card suit, four cards in the other major. Opener must pass.

1NT - 2♣ - 2 any - pass

When the object was to play in any suit but clubs

1NT - 2♣ - 2 any - 3♣

At least six club cards. Opener must pass.

Continuations by responder – invitational options (11-12 points)

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ – 2NT

Invitational, 11-12 points with 4♠

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ – 2NT

Invitational, 11-12 points, no major suit fit has been found.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥/♠ - 3♥/♠

Invites opener to bid game in the agreed major with a maximum, otherwise pass

Continuations by responder – strong options (13+ points)

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ – 3NT

Game values with 4♠. Opener passes or bids 4♠

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ – 3NT

No major suit fit has been found. Opener must pass.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥/♠ - 4♥/♠

Opener must pass

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥/3♠

5-card suit, 4 cards in the other major. Opener bids 4♥/4♠ with 3-card support, otherwise 3NT

Responses of 2♦/2♥/2♠

These bids, called weak takeouts, show 0-10 points and at least a 5-card suit. Opener must pass.

Responses of 3♣/3♦

Natural, 6+ cards, game forcing. With a five card minor 3NT is often to be preferred.

Opener:

- Rebids 3NT with no fit and no interest in a slam
- Raises with support and slam interest

Responses of 3♥/3♠

Natural, 5-card suit, game forcing

Opener rebids:

- 3NT with a doubleton holding
- 4♥/4♠ otherwise
- Maybe a strong 6+ suit with slam interest, in which case responder bids on after opener's response.
- Responses of 4♥/4♠

Natural, 6-card or longer suit. Opener must pass.

1.2 Balanced hands with 15 – 19 points

Open one of a suit and rebid no trumps. A 5-card major is no bar to a rebid in no trumps.

With 15-16 rebid no trumps at the lowest level

With 17-18 make a single jump rebid in no trumps

With 19 jump to 3NT even if the response was at the one level

If partner has replied at the two level:

With 15-17 rebid 2NT

With 18-19 rebid 3NT

Responder's continuations after opener rebids in no trumps

A return to two of opener's major suit after a 1NT rebid is weak, showing 3 card support

Three of opener's suit is forcing. If this is a major suit, responder will have 3-card support; if a minor it will normally be 4+ cards. Example:

The bidding goes 1♦-1♠-1NT. You hold

♠ A J 7 4 3

♥ 4 3

♦ Q J 6 2

♣ K 3

Bid 3♦, looking for 3-card spade support or game in no trumps or, exceptionally, game in diamonds

- A minimum rebid in responder's suit is weak, usually six cards
- A jump to three of responder's suit over 1NT is invitational with a 6-card suit
- A new suit at the two level is natural and weak unless it is a reverse.
1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♣ is looking to play in 2♣ or 2♥
- BUT 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♠ is game forcing since opener has already denied four spades. Responder must have a shapely hand with at least four spades and five hearts.

A new suit at the three level is natural and forcing.

1.3 Opening 2NT

Open 2NT on all balanced hands of 20-22 points. This can include any 5-card suit. 2NT may also be the best choice on some slightly unbalanced hands (including a hand with a singleton ace or king in a minor suit).

Responses to 2NT

Responder will first consider whether the partnership has at least the 25 points needed to bid game in no trumps or a major suit. Four points in responder's hand is enough. Any response is forcing to game.

Responses on balanced hands

0-3	Pass
4-10	Raise to 3NT; opener must pass
11-12	Invite slam by bidding an invitational quantitative 4NT. Partner should bid 6NT with a maximum or pass otherwise
13-15	Bid a slam, either raise directly to 6NT (opener must pass) or first investigate a major suit fit via Stayman
16+	Bid 7NT

Response of 3♣ (Stayman)

Shows values for game and an interest in a major suit fit. Opener rebids:

- 3♦ no 4-card major
- 3♥ Four hearts, possibly four spades
- 3♠ Four spades, not four hearts

Continuations by responder

After 2NT-3♣-3♦ (no 4-card major) responder continues:

- 3♥/3♠ 5-card suit, implies four of the other major. Opener bids 4♥/4♠ with 3-card support, otherwise 3NT
- 3NT no further interest, implies an unbid 4-card major.

Response of 3♦

5+ cards, 7+ points. Forcing to game and slam invitational.

Responses of 3♥/3♠

Natural, 5-card suit, game forcing

Opener rebids:

- 3NT with a doubleton holding
- 4♥/4♠ otherwise

Responses of 4♥/4♠

Natural, 6-card or longer suit. Opener must pass.

1.4 Opening 2♣

This is the strongest bid in the Acoll system, showing 23+ points or any game forcing hand.

Responses to 2♣

Make a *negative response* of 2♦ unless your hand contains

- eight or more points

With

- a balanced hand of 8+ points, respond 2NT
- a 5-card suit in an otherwise balanced hand 2NT is the best choice
- a no loser 6-card or longer suit, make a jump response in that suit e.g 2♣-3♥

Opener's rebid with a balanced hand

Points	Rebid
23-24	2NT
25-27	3NT
28-30	4NT

The 2♣ opening does not necessarily show a balanced hand. With an unbalanced hand rebid in a suit.

Responder's action after 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT

This is the only rebid that responder may pass below game level. With 2+ points responder should go for game, choosing from the same options as over a 2NT opening. Consider a slam when the partnership may have 33+ points.

Continuations after a positive response

After a positive response of 2NT, opener rebids a 5+ card suit (game forcing) or 3NT with a balanced hand. Over a 3NT rebid responder, with extra values, can continue by bidding his lowest 4+card suit to look for a slam.

SECTION 2

Unbalanced hands

This includes all hands not covered in Section 1.

2.1 Opening bids of one of a suit

Choice of suit to open (if not suitable for 1NT)

- With two suits of unequal length, open the longer.
- With two suits of equal length, with exactly four hearts and four spades open 1♥, otherwise open the higher ranking suit.
- With 4-4-4-1 shape and a red suit singleton open the suit below the singleton (i.e. singleton heart open 1♦, singleton diamond open 1♣)
- With 4-4-4-1 shape and a black suit singleton open the middle of the three suits (i.e. singleton spade open 1♦, singleton club open 1♥)

Is the hand worth an opening bid?

- Any hand with at least 12 points may be opened
- With 10-11 points, use the *Rule of 20*.
(*RO20*) Add the number of cards in your two longest suits to your points. If the total is 20 or more open the bidding.

Upper limit

The normal range for a one level suit opening is 12-19 but distributional considerations may make a hand with more points unsuitable for a stronger opening.

Example:

♠ A K 7 5	is unsuitable for a 2NT opening
♥ 6	so 1♦ is best. If partner cannot respond
♦ A Q 9 6	over 1♦ it is unlikely you have missed game. Force to game
♣ A K J 3	over any response.

2.2 Raising the opening bid

Support partner's opening bid in a major suit whenever you have 4+ cards in that suit and 6+ points

With support for a minor suit, bid a major suit of your own first. Support for a minor suit denies a 4-card major suit. To raise past 3NT in a minor you should have a very distributional hand; otherwise you will investigate a no trump contract. A minor suit raise to the two or three level is based on points (6-9 or 10-12) since opener's most likely continuation is to bid no trumps.

1♣ - 1NT = 8-10 with no other 4-card suit. With 6-7 and four clubs raise to 2♣

With support for a major suit take into account shortages in other suits as well as points when raising. With enough trumps, a singleton is like an extra king and a void is as good as an extra ace. A doubleton is a marginal extra asset.

A better method of evaluating a hand with a major suit fit is to use the *Losing Trick Count*. (This is covered at the end of *Continuing Bridge*)

LTC for raising partner's major suit opening

Count the losers in each suit

Count each suit of three or more cards as three losers. Deduct one loser for each of the ace, king or queen that you hold in the suit.

With two cards in the suit, count two losers. Deduct one loser for holding the ace or king.

With one card count one loser, unless it is the ace.

With a void there are no losers.

Find your loser total

Add the losers in each suit together to get a total loser count.

- With 9-10 losers raise to the two level
- With eight losers raise to the three level
- With seven losers raise to the four level

A raise to two of partner's major may be the best choice with only three trumps and an unbalanced hand. To raise to the three level or higher you must have at least four trumps.

Very good raises

Hands with 4-card support and 16+ points should make a jump shift response before supporting opener's suit (*see Section 2.3*). With fewer than 16 always raise partner immediately. When holding a game going hand, only bid a new suit followed by a jump to game with 3-card support.

2.3 Responding in a new suit

A change-of-suit response at the one level promises at least six points and introducing a new suit at the two level at least 10 points. There is no upper limit. Opener must bid again (unless, exceptionally, responder has already passed). Simple new suit responses show 4+ cards except 1♠ - 2♥ which guarantees 5+♥.

Choice of suit

With two 5-card or longer suits, bid the higher ranking if you intend to show both suits in the most economical way.

With more than one four card suit bid the lowest first. Bid "up the line".

With suits of unequal length, bid the longer first unless the hand is too weak to respond at the two level. Show a 4-card major at the one level in preference to a longer minor at the two level with fewer than 13 points. To bid the longer minor and then the 4-card major is called a *Responder's reverse* and is forcing to game.

A strong jump shift response in a new suit

This shows a 5-card suit and 16+ points. A jump shift is used on only three hand types:

- A single 6+ card suit
- A 5+ card suit with good 3-card or longer support for opener's suit
- A single 5-card suit, where the rebid can be in no trumps.

2.4 Responding in no trumps

A response in no trumps is a *limit bid*, describing the hand within a defined range. The ranges are:

1NT	6 - 9
2NT	10 - 12
3NT	13-15 (no 5-card minor, no 4-card major)

Always Prefer to respond in a major suit at the one level

A 1NT response may be something of a '*dustbin*' bid when there is no other appropriate response, e.g. weak unbalanced hands not suitable for a response at the two level. Conventionally over a 1♣ opening, a 1NT response shows a balanced hand with 8 - 10 points and no other 4-card suit. With 6 - 7 and four clubs bid 2♣.

2.5 Opener's second bid

Opener has two main considerations on the second round:

- To distinguish between balanced and unbalanced hands
- To describe the strength of the hand

A balanced hand will always rebid in no trumps (unless you can support responder's major suit). So to bid two suits guarantees 5+ cards in the first, except for the rare 4-4-4-1 hands, which can usually be discounted by the actual suits bid. Unbalanced hands fall into three point ranges.

- Hands with 12 - 15 points are weak
- Hands with 16 - 18 points are of intermediate strength
- Hands with 19 - 20 points are strong.

Opener's options with a weak unbalanced hand (in order of preference)

- To support partner's major with 4+ cards
- To bid a new suit at the lowest level without reversing, showing 4+ cards
- To rebid the suit opened.

With an intermediate or strong unbalanced hand there are four types of bid

- A jump in the suit opened shows a strong 6-card suit and around 16-18 points, encouraging but not forcing after a response at the one level (forcing to game after a two level response); with an even stronger hand you can jump to game.
- Jump support for partner – 4-card support and the equivalent of around 16-18 points, taking distribution into account. Encouraging but not forcing; again, you can bid game with a better hand still
- A jump in a new suit – the strongest option – at least a 4-card suit, at least 19 points (or the equivalent in a shapely hand) over a one level response (16-19 points over a two level response), forcing to game
- A reverse bid in a new suit, 16+ points or compensating distribution, forcing for one round at least

A reverse bid is one that would require responder to go to the three level to give preference to opener's first suit. An alternative definition is to imagine a barrier at two of opener's first suit; opener reverses by bidding above that barrier.

After a reverse by opener at the two level the following rebids by responder are not forcing:

- Minimum preference for opener's first suit
- A minimum rebid in responder's own suit
- A minimum rebid in no trumps

All other bids are forcing to game. A reverse at the three level is always forcing to game.

2.6 Responder's second bid

Responder's options after opener bids a third suit without a reverse or jump are:

With a weak hand (6-9)

- Pass
- Return to opener's first suit at the lowest level. 3-card support is quite adequate for a known 5-card suit. Even a doubleton is acceptable with no other suitable alternative, to give opener another chance (known as 'false preference')
- Bid 1NT (if the bidding is low enough)
- Rebid responder's suit showing 6+ cards.

With a game invitational hand (10-12)

- Jump raise opener's first suit with 3-card support
- Rebid 2NT
- Single raise opener's second suit with 4-card support
- Jump rebid responder's suit showing 6+ cards and extra points.

With a strong game going hand (13+)

- Bid game in either of opener's suits or responder's suit
- Rebid 3NT
- Bid the fourth suit (*see below*)

Bidding the fourth suit

When the partnership has bid three suits a bid of the fourth suit is forcing and artificial, asking partner for more information. The only exception is the auction 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ which shows four spades (still forcing). In this instance 2♠ would be the artificial '*fourth suit forcing*' (FSF).

After the fourth suit is bid at the two level, the following rebids by opener are not forcing:

- A minimum rebid in opener's first suit
- A minimum rebid of no trumps
- Simple preference for responder's suit (often only doubleton support)

Other rebids are forcing to game. Fourth suit at the three level is always forcing to game. These guidelines are similar to bidding after a reverse. It follows that to use fourth suit at the two level you need at least 11 points and at the three level, a good 12 or so. Avoid FSF if you can make a natural descriptive bid.

If responder bids on over opener's minimum rebid, the partnership is forced to game.

3. Slam bidding

The most straightforward way of bidding a slam is by sheer weight of points. If both hands are balanced you need about 33 points to make 6NT, 37 for 7NT.

3.1 Blackwood

In other circumstances a bid of 4NT is the *Blackwood Convention*, which asks partner to show how many aces he holds. The responses are:

5♣	zero or four aces	5♦	one ace
5♥	two aces	5♠	three aces

If the 4NT bidder follows up with 5NT, this confirms that the partnership has all four aces and asks for kings on the same scale. After 5NT either partner may bid a grand slam if there appears to be sufficient tricks.

Only use Blackwood when you are certain the response will tell you what you want to know. In particular, if you have a side suit with two losers and partner's response to Blackwood confirms there is one ace missing, you do not know whether partner can cover your second loser in the side suit. Blackwood hasn't given you the answer, so you shouldn't have used it in the first place.

3.2 Cue Bidding

Another approach is by *cue bidding*. Once a suit is agreed, a bid in a new suit which commits the partnership to game shows a *control*, in other words an ace or void— a holding that will prevent the opponents from winning quick tricks in that suit. For example 1♥ - 3♥ - 4♣ is a cue bid, showing a control in clubs.

Use the following guidelines when cue bidding:

- Show *first round* controls – aces and voids – before second round controls
- Shortage controls – voids and singletons – are as valuable as aces and kings in preventing the opponents from winning early tricks, but you need enough trumps to ruff partner's losers and enough tricks from other sources
- In particular it is unwise as your *first* cue bid to show a shortage in a suit bid by partner
- With a choice of cue bids prefer the *cheapest*; for example 1♥ - 3♥ - 4♦ would deny a first round control in spades or clubs

4. Pre-emptive opening bids

A pre-emptive bid is one that skips one or more levels of bidding and is less than an opening hand. It is made on the first round of bidding, with an opening bid at the two, three, four or five level. Its purpose is to take away the opponents' bidding space and force them to guess at an uncomfortably high level.

2♦ 2♥ 2♠ = 6-card suit 5-9 points (known as weak twos)

3♣ 3♦ 3♥ 3♠ = 7-card suit 5-9 points

4♣ 4♦ 4♥ 4♠ = 8-card suit 5-9 points

You need:

- A long, strong suit
- Few defensive tricks –one ace at most
- No side 4-card major suit

4.1 Responses to Weak Two opening bids

Action	Meaning
Pass	not the values for game
New Suit	5+ cards natural and constructive
Raise suit	pre-emptive, let the opponents guess.
2NT	forcing enquiry which shows interest in game, 15+HCP
3NT	natural, to play
Raise to game	to p-lay

4.2 Responding to higher level pre-empts

A raise to game may be a further pre-empt or bid in the expectation of making game, A raise below game (e.g. 3♦ 4♦) is not a game try.

You should only bid 3NT if:

- You can see the tricks in your own hand, or
- You have a fit for partner and can guard all the other suits.

A new suit by responder is natural and forcing.

5. Defensive Bidding

5.1 Suit Overcalls

When opponents open with a suit bid, an overcall in another suit at the one level shows 8-16 points and a respectable 5-card suit usually with at least two honours. If your suit is lower ranking than opponents' the overcall would be at the two level, then you need 10+ and a 6-card suit.

With more than about 16 points start with a double rather than overcall.

Responding to an overcall

Supporting partner is very straightforward. As the overcaller should have a good suit there is no need to strain to find an alternative place to play. You can raise the overcall whenever you have 3-card support. Raise the overcall on the same values as you would raise an opening bid.

To bid no trumps in response to an overcall you need a good guard in the opponents' suit. A 1NT response shows 9-12 points and a 2NT response 13-14

To bid a new suit opposite an overcall you need a good suit – six cards or five very good ones; the bid is encouraging but not forcing, so partner may leave you to play in your suit. At the one level you should have 8 + points to bid a new suit, at the two level 10+. A change of suit with a jump is forcing.

Jump overcalls

A jump to one higher level than necessary (e.g. 1♥-2♠) shows a **weak** hand with a 6-card suit and around 5-9 points (a *weak jump overcall*). It is very similar to a weak two opening bid.. At the three level (e.g. 1♥ - 3♣), the suit should have a 7-card suit especially when vulnerable).

If you raise partner's suit then that is pre-emptive. If you raise him to game then that might be pre-emptive or it might be to make. The opponents have to guess. It is unusual to introduce a new suit over it but if you do then it is natural, at least six cards and forcing.

If you have a six card suit and, at least, an opening bid then you can bid the suit and then bid it again at the minimum level on the next round, If you are even stronger (17+) start with a takeout double and then, over partner's response, bid your suit.

5.2 Overcalling no trumps after a suit opening

A 1NT overcall shows a balanced hand of 15-17 points, including some strength (ideally two stoppers) in the opponent's suit. With 20-22 points overcall 2NT. Hands with 18-19, double then bid no trumps at the lowest level.

Responding to a no trump overcall

Bid exactly as in response to an opening no trump bid, but taking into account the fact that partner will have a stronger hand. So, use Stayman etc as before.

In the fourth seat (the *protective position*) 1NT shows 11-14 and usually a stopper in the opponents' suit. Respond as to a 1NT opening.

5.3 Takeout doubles

Requirements for a takeout double:

- Shortage in opener's suit or a very strong hand.
 - A hand on which you would have opened the bidding. There is no upper limit.
 - Tolerance for any suit partner may bid
- . With support for all suits prefer a double to an overcall on a poor suit.

Double on hands of 17+ points. For example, with 17+ and a decent suit, double first and then bid your suit over partner's response. Balanced hands with 18+ points also start with a double then rebid in no trumps.

5.4 Responding to takeout doubles

- You must respond to a takeout double unless you are exceptionally strong in the opponents' suit.
- With up to 8 points bid your best suit at the minimum level. With 9-12 jump in your suit. A good guideline is to imagine partner had opened the bidding in your suit; if you would have considered giving jump support you should make a jump bid now.
- With a choice of suits, prefer to show a major.
- To bid no trumps you need much the same strength as in response to an opening bid; be sure to have good values in the opponents' suit, the one in which partner will be short.
- With the values to at least invite game and no obvious choice, bid the opponents' suit. This is *forcing to suit agreement*; in other words neither partner may pass until a fit has been found.

Table of responses to partner's double of 1♦:

- | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| • 1♥, 1♠, 2♣ | 0-8 points, at least a 4-card suit |
| • 2♥, 2♠, 3♣ | 9-12, at least a 4-card suit |
| • 1NT | 6-9, stoppers in diamonds |
| • 2NT | 10-12, stoppers in diamonds |
| • 3NT | 13-15, stoppers in diamonds |

The responses are the same similar after opening in other suits.

5.5 Protective bidding

If your left hand opponent's opening bid has been followed by two passes, you may overcall or double on weaker hands than sitting over the opening bidder, as partner is marked with some values. In response to a protective bid, assume partner has already bid about three points of your hand (known as the *principle of the transferred king*).

A jump overcall in this position shows about 12-16 with a good 6-card suit.

In the sequence one of a suit followed by two passes, 1NT shows 11-14 points and usually with a stop in the opener's suit. Bid exactly as in response to an opening bid of 1NT, so use Stayman and weak takeouts etc as before. *See also Section 1.1.*

With a stronger hand, where you would overcall 1NT in second seat, double is usually the best first action in the protective position. A 2NT overcall shows 19-21 points, a takeout double followed by a minimum no trump rebid shows around 15-18; both with stops in opener's suit.

5.6 Defence to opponents' opening 1NT

A double of 1NT is for penalties, showing 16+ points.

The doubler's partner will pass most of the time. Only with a very shapely hand is the double removed. A new suit at the two level is weak, at the three level it is not forcing but highly encouraging.

If opener's partner rescues into a suit, any further doubles are also for penalties. Six or more points and four trumps headed by an honour are adequate.

Suit overcalls of 1NT

Use the same criteria when deciding whether the suit is good enough to overcall an opening 1NT, as you would for deciding on a two level overcall of an opening suit bid – at least 10 points and preferably a 6-card suit. A jump overcall shows a seven or very good 6-card suit and about seven tricks in your own hand.

5.7 Defence to pre-emptive opening bids

Assume partner has about seven points when making a decision what to do – your partner should remember you have done this. You may:

- Overcall on a 6-card suit or a very good 5-card suit and values for an opening bid.
- Make a takeout double on any hand worth an opening bid and support for the other suits – you may not always have the ideal shape, but support for an unbid major suit is important.
- Bid 3NT on a hand you would have overcalled 1NT over an opening bid of one (3NT may be the best choice on stronger hands and on some other hands, say with a long strong minor, which might make lots of tricks).

It follows that with values to spare, say about eight playing tricks, you should bid game yourself if you can.

After a four level or higher pre-empt the same principles apply. A double is still for takeout, but partner is more likely to leave it in without a long suit to bid. Doubler's partner can pass the double more often with a few points and nothing useful to say

5.8 Other uses of doubles

- The general principle is that doubles of opening natural suit bids are for takeout up to and including the level of 3♠.
- Partner makes a takeout double and opponents raise, for example 1♥-dbl-2♥-dbl. Known as a *responsive double* this invites the doubler to choose a suit.
- A double of a suit bid in a competitive auction shows at least two possible resting places, either in an unbid suit or in partner's suit. For example 1♣-1♥-2♦-dbl shows a spade suit and tolerance for hearts.
- If partner has overcalled and opener's suit has been raised, a double shows interest in at least one of the other suits and a hand with useful high cards. For example, 1♦-1♠-2♦-dbl. This is called a *competitive double*.

6. Dealing with Intervention

6.1 Takeout (negative) doubles or overcalls *after partner has opened*

Basic principles

Doubles of all suit bids up to and including the level of 2♠ (higher level with partnership agreement) are for takeout. When partner opens with a suit bid and the next player overcalls at the one or two level, a double is for takeout and implies support for the other two unbid suits.

To double you need much the same strength as you would for a natural call, depending on the level at which opener is going to have to bid. If opener still has a bid available at the one level, as few as a suitable 6 points will do. If the bidding is likely to reach the two level you need at least 8 points and to go to the three level at least 10 and so on. There is no upper point limit for a negative double.

A double promises four cards in any unbid major suit. So, for example:

1♣ - 1♠ - dble	Promises four hearts
1♦ - 1♥ - dble	Promises exactly four spades
1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠	Shows five+ spades (as a double would show four)
1♣ - 1♦ - dble	Shows four cards in both majors

Opener's rebid after negative double

This is quite straightforward and very similar to responding to any other takeout double. Just imagine that partner had made a minimum response in an unbid suit. For example, if the bidding has started 1♦ - 1♠ - double – pass, you simply bid as if partner had responded 1♥. If considering a raise, responder should always remember that he has in effect already bid the suit.

When responder is strong in the opponents' suit

For example, partner opens 1♠, right hand opponent overcalls 2♣, and you have a hand that would have doubled 2♣ for penalties. As double would be for takeout you must pass and

hope that partner can reopen with a takeout double, which you will pass for penalties. It follows that partner should always *protect* your possible penalty double, even with a minimum opening bid, unless he has such length in the opponent's suit (at least 3 cards) that it is highly unlikely that you could have such a hand.

6.2 Action over opponent's takeout double of the opening bid

With no support for opener and fewer than 10 points.

Your choices are:

- Pass With up to six points and no good suit
- 1NT Balanced hand, 7-10, stoppers in other suits
- New suit With 6+ points at the one level; 10+ points at the two level

With at least 10 points and fewer than four cards in opener's suit

The options are:

- Bid a new suit, natural and forcing – just as if there had been no intervention
- With good defence and no outstanding playing strength, redouble. A redouble tells opener that the doubler may have misjudged and seeks opener's co-operation in penalizing the opponents.

After a redouble all further doubles by the redoubling side are for penalties. As opener, do not bid in front of the redoubler unless your hand is weak and unsuitable for defence. With a reasonable opening bid pass first and take action later if it appears that opponents have found a safe resting place. Except when opener has shown a minimum distributional hand, the redoubler promises to bid again.

With support for partner

The more cards you have in the partnership in one suit, the more likely it is that opponents have a fit also. (If your side have a 9-card fit, it is mathematically certain that opponents have at least an 8-card fit in another suit). So both sides may be able to make a high level contract and you want to make it harder for the opponents to find theirs. That means you should shade your raises.

Watch for the vulnerability and be prepared to raise to the three or four level if not vulnerable. You can raise to the two level with 3-card support and a bit of shape.

With a genuine raise to the three level or higher of opener's suit, you bid 2NT, which has no meaning in a natural sense, since you would redouble with a balanced 10+ points.

6.3 Action over intervention after our 1NT opening

Opponents make a natural overcall

- a double is for takeout.
- a suit bid at the lowest level is not forcing, a jump suit bid is forcing.
- a cue bid of the overcall suit is Stayman showing a game going hand and asking about 4-card majors.

If the opponents overcall your partner's 1NT at the three level a double is still for takeout. The overcaller will have a good suit so any penalty would be small. You need to check on 4-4 major suit fits and whether opener has a guard in their suit.

Opponents make a penalty double of 1NT

All suit bids by responder are natural and weak, including 2♣; redouble is strong, hoping to make 1NT redoubled or to double opponents for penalties if they bid on.

7. Defensive Carding Methods

7.1 Opening leads

Table of standard opening leads

The standard rules for leads are

- a. top of a sequence
- b. top of an internal sequence
- c. fourth highest from a good suit
- d. lowest from three to an honour
- e. top of a doubleton
- f. MUD (middle, up, down) from three small cards, play the top card on the next round
- g. second highest from four small cards, play your original fourth highest card on the next round
- h. against a no trump contract the lead of a king asks partner to play any honour card held (unless to do so would cost a trick), otherwise to give a count signal.
- i. K from AK doubleton

Type of holding	Example(s)	Lead against a no trump contract	Rule	Lead against a suit contract	Rule
Sequence of three or more honours	K Q J 4 Q J 10 7	K Q	a,h a	K Q	a a
Two honours then a gap to a third card	K Q 10 9 J 10 8 6 5	K J	a,h a	K J	a a
Four or more cards headed by two honours in sequence	K Q 7 6 3 Q J 5 4	6 4	c c	K Q	a a
Three cards headed by two honours in sequence	J 10 7	J	a	J	a
An internal sequence of two or more honours	K J 10 8 4	J	b	J	b
A broken suit of four or more cards with at least one honour	Q 10 7 5 2	5	c	5	c
Three cards to an honour	K 7 3	3	d	3	d
Three or more small cards	9 7 5 8 6 3 2	7 (then 9) 6 (then 2)	f g	7 (then 9) 6 (then 2)	f g
A doubleton	J 6 6 4	J 6	e e	J 6	e e
A suit headed by AK	A K 8 5 2	5	c	A	a
AK doubleton	A K	Avoid this lead		K	i
A strong suit headed by AKJ	A K J 9 6	K	h	A	a

When leading a suit bid by partner choose the normal card as shown in the table above.

7.2 Signals

When following suit and you have two or more cards in sequence. Where you need to play one of the sequence, play the lowest card of the sequence. For example, partner leads a low card, dummy plays low and you hold Q J 2 – play the jack. If you hold K Q J play the J.

On partner's lead, of an honour when not attempting to win a trick, play a high card to encourage a continuation of that suit and a low card to discourage.

Apply the 'Rule of 11' when partner leads low against a no trump contract – subtract the pips on the card led from eleven; the result gives the number of higher cards than the one led in the other three hands (of which you can see yours and dummy's).

The play of the queen on the lead of an ace against a suit contract tells partner that you can win the next trick with the jack or by ruffing.

When returning partner's suit, if you started with three, return the higher of the remaining two. If you started with four or more, return your original fourth highest.

On declarer's lead, play a high card to show an even number of cards in the suit and a low card to show an odd number.

Suit preference signals, in obvious circumstances, for example when giving partner a ruff, a high card asks for the higher ranking side suit and a low card asks for the lower ranking side suit.

Trump signals, playing high-low in trumps shows that you started with three trumps and are looking for a ruff.

7.3 Discards

As with signals, a discard of a high card shows interest in that suit, a low card lack of interest.

Materials List

Book 1: Beginning Bridge	latest edition	2019
Book 2: Continuing Bridge	latest edition	2016
Practice Beginning Bridge	latest edition	2017
Practice Continuing Bridge	latest edition	2017
Fast Track Bridge		2018
Standard English Foundation System Summary Card		2019

Books in the **Really Easy Bridge Series**

Really Easy Bidding	2019
Really Easy Mistakes	2000
Really Easy Play in No Trumps	2002
Really Easy Play with Trumps	2001
Really Easy Defence	2002

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