

TANGERINE BOOK
August 2012

Simplified guide to
EBU Regulations
on Bidding and Play



Introduction

This booklet is a guide to the EBU's regulations on bidding and play. It is not a replacement for the 'Orange Book', the *Handbook of EBU Directives and Permitted Agreements*, but a summary of the important elements of that book.

There are three sections to this guide:

1. The Tournament Director
2. The Auction: both the mechanics and how to explain your system
3. Regulations on bidding

An Appendix is available to download from <http://www.ebu.co.uk/lawsandethics> that gives a complete list of all permitted partnership agreements. This is useful if you want to check whether something unusual is allowed.

Regulations are described here somewhat imprecisely as it is impossible to write a guide that is both simple and sufficiently detailed to satisfy the most pedantic reader. If you wish to play unusual methods, or to know the exact wording of a regulation, you should read the Orange Book itself or consult your Tournament Director.

Revised 1st August 2012. Changes effective from August 1st 2012 are shown in RED.

1. The Tournament Director (TD)

There will be a TD at all organised bridge games, who should be called whenever something goes wrong. Even a playing director prefers to be called as soon as possible. If you try to proceed without the TD or make your own ruling it will only make matters worse. Never criticise opponents for calling the TD; they are only trying to help.

A list of situations where the TD should be called can be found in the Orange Book, but simplest is just to call immediately following any irregularity, such as an insufficient bid or a revoke. In particular, if you find out during the auction that one of your opponents has incorrectly alerted or explained something, and you now wish you had bid differently, call the TD at once.

Bad behaviour is unacceptable and should always be called to the TD's attention.

If you or your partner hesitates, or gives a wrong explanation, or misbids, the TD may adjust the score in your opponents' favour. This can feel as if you are being accused of lying or deliberate unethical behaviour. The TD is not trying to divine whether or not you are telling the truth, merely addressing a standard set of questions set out in the Laws about what other players might do in your position. You need to approach such rulings with the same frame of mind as when partner disagrees with your bidding – it's purely a bridge judgement, nothing to do with your ethics.

One way to avoid problems is to avoid putting partner into a difficult position in the first place. Don't think then pass when partner might have a problem, don't sign off slowly if partner may want to bid on, and (easier said than done) don't forget the system.

An infraction by the opponents does not give you the right to a ruling in your favour. Sometimes the Laws will lead the TD to say, 'No damage, no adjustment'. Call for an investigation by the TD, and then take the ruling (whatever it is) with good grace.

2. The Auction

Boards and Bidding Boxes

The board usually stays in the centre of the table so everyone can see the dealer and vulnerability. Remember to count your cards before looking at your hand. It's much easier to sort out a 14-card hand before you look at it! After the number of tricks taken has been agreed, shuffle your hand before putting it back in the board.

Most clubs use bidding boxes. Their use is generally self-explanatory, but 'Stop' and 'Alert' cards can cause some confusion.

Alerts: The usual way to alert partner's call is to put the alert card briefly into the centre of the table, or to tap it on the table in front of each opponent. You must make sure that both opponents have seen the alert.

Stop: Before making a jump bid, put the 'Stop' card in front of you followed by the bid. Leave the card there for 10 seconds, then pick it up. If your right hand opponent makes a 'Stop' bid, then wait for either 10 seconds or until they pick up the 'Stop' card, whichever is longer. Don't make it obvious that you have nothing to think about – it should be impossible to tell whether you have a problem or your choice of call is easy.

Once you deliberately remove any bidding cards from the box the call is considered to be made. If you have pulled the wrong card by accident, call the TD. If you pull out the 'Stop' card then change your mind, you can put it back again, but partner must pretend he does not know that you were thinking of making a jump bid.

Explaining your System

The Laws of Bridge require that your opponents are entitled to know about all your agreements, whether explicitly discussed or from partnership experience. This disclosure takes place through convention cards, alerts, announcements and answers to questions.

Convention Cards

Many club players don't use convention cards, although doing so is in their own interests. Convention cards help to disclose agreements quickly to opponents. If you play unusual or complex systems, you should fill in convention cards even in club bridge. As a minimum, fill in the front of the scorecard with a small list of agreements.

Alerting and Announcing

Alerts and Announcements are one way to disclose your agreements. The rules can appear confusing, but remember that the purpose of an alert is to warn opponents that they may not know what your partner's call means. If there is no alert, your opponents are entitled to assume that you have no special agreement that makes the call alertable. Alert or announce only partner's calls, never your own.

Announcements

When partner makes an 'announceable' call, you explain it using a predefined phrase. You announce only the strength of natural 1NT openings, some two-level responses to 1NT, and natural two-level openings. No other bid should be announced.

Natural 1NT opening: Announce the range eg '12-14' '13-17' '16-18', followed by 'may contain a singleton' if appropriate. Don't announce 1NT overcalls or 2NT bids.

Artificial Responses to 1NT:

- Stayman 2♣ Announce 'Stayman' (alert if it does not ask for four-card majors, or if it is not natural following a double)
- 2♦ (Transfer) Announce 'Hearts' (alert if it does not promise five or more hearts)
- 2♥ (Transfer) Announce 'Spades' (alert if it does not promise five or more spades)

Responses to Stayman and transfers are only alertable if non-standard meanings are used. Natural weak takeouts do not need to be alerted.

Natural Two-Level Openings: are announced by stating their range as

'Strong, forcing', 'Strong, non-forcing', 'Intermediate', 'Weak', 'Intermediate to strong, forcing' or 'Weak to Intermediate'

Artificial Two-Level Openings: are alerted, including Lucas and Benjamin 2♣/2♦ Bids.

Alerts

The Orange Book has a long section on Alerting including many specific examples, but if you keep to the following four rules you are unlikely to go far wrong:

1. Other than opening bids, don't alert any bids above 3NT. Otherwise:
2. If you think your opponents will understand your partner's bid to mean something other than your methods dictate, alert it.
3. Unless you must announce it, a pass or bid must be alerted if it is not natural, or it is natural but has a potentially unexpected meaning.
4. Do not alert: a take-out double of a natural suit bid; a penalty double of an artificial suit bid; or a penalty double of any NT bid. Alert any other double.

The rule on alerting doubles is unlike the other rules that focus on whether a bid is "natural" or its meaning is "unexpected". Sometimes you need to alert a double that is obviously penalty, or not alert a take-out double that your opponents think should be penalty. Pairs play doubles in so many different ways that there is rarely agreement on what the "natural" meaning of a double should be. Instead, stick to the rule above: if it is not alerted, double is assumed to be take-out of a natural suit bid and penalties otherwise.

Answering Questions

Players often err by saying something like, 'I'm going to take my partner's bid to mean...' They are trying to be helpful, but it is the wrong thing to do. Only explain specific agreements. If the truthful answer is, 'We have never discussed that and nothing like it has come up before', then say so. Another possible answer might be, 'We have never discussed this particular bid but in similar situations we play this...'

In a regular partnership you will acquire knowledge of partner's habits. Answers such as, 'No agreement' or 'Random' are then unlikely to be the full story.

Take care with words whose meaning might be unclear. For example, 'forcing' implies a strong hand to many players; if a bid is forcing, but might be based on a weak hand you must say so. Don't use 'normal' or 'natural' to describe a call, and especially not a lead or signal, as it is often misinterpreted. In the same way, just naming a convention may not be enough.

Two-suited overcalls are a notorious example: *Ghestem* means different things to different people. Doubles also cause trouble, so make your description simple and clear. A takeout double is one that expects partner to bid, while a penalty double is one that partner is expected to pass (in either case unless he has a very unusual hand).

Asking Questions

You may ask questions whenever it is your turn, but there can be consequences. Unless you need to know at once, it may be wiser to wait until the end of the auction. If

partner is on lead, even better to wait until after he has led face-down. Asking questions about specific calls may give partner information about your hand, which can constrain his actions. It is also improper to ask questions which may mislead your opponents. The TD might adjust the result in either case.

Specific questions such as, 'Is that bid weak?' or, 'Is that bid forcing?' often receive simple one-word answers which may be incomplete. Similarly, 'standard' or 'natural' in questions will often lead to unhelpful responses. In general, ask, 'What does that call show?', or ask for an explanation of the entire auction before the opening lead is faced.

When things go wrong

Alerts and explanations can give rise to problems. They can warn you that you have misbid, or that partner has forgotten what you play. Remember that if you learn from partner's alerts or explanations that something has gone wrong you are not allowed to use this information. You must continue to bid as if your original understanding was correct.

If you are reasonably sure that partner has wrongly alerted or given a wrong explanation, then as soon as the Law allows you must call the TD and explain. If you become dummy or declarer, this is before the opening lead. If you are defending, call the TD at the end of the play.

If you know that partner's call is probably alertable but you cannot remember its meaning, you should alert and inform your opponents when asked that you are unsure. If you have a convention card you can offer this to your opponents, otherwise the TD may be able to assist. If you give a wrong explanation or alert, call the TD as soon as you realise.

Psyches & Misbids

The rules described here only regulate agreements. Your hand may sometimes bear little resemblance to the meaning you have agreed for a call, eg opening 1NT on a three-count. This is called a psyche if you do it on purpose, or a misbid if you do it by accident. Where these regulations say that a bid 'must' be something, that refers only to your agreed meaning – you can still psyche or get it wrong by accident.

Psyches are nearly always permitted, but the psyche must be as big a surprise to partner as it is to the opponents. If you frequently make the same type of psyche, partner may start to suspect what you hold, and it could become effectively a private agreement between the two of you. If you psyche very often without good reason, or otherwise bid very wildly or frivolously, the TD may penalise you for having lost interest in the game.

3. Regulations on Bidding

Why Regulate Bidding at All?

At the finals of the world bridge championships you can use whatever methods you like. However, your opponents will have plenty of time to prepare, and may have professional advisers to help decide the best defence. For most of us, there needs to be a balance between the freedom to play our favourite methods, while not leaving our opponents confused because they don't understand what the bidding means.

What Can I Play?

It is up to your club what bidding methods are allowed, but many clubs follow the same framework as that used in EBU competitions. There are four defined 'levels' called 2, 3, 4 and 5 which allow increasing freedom, together with a Simple System. Clubs may wish to enforce more restrictive rules (eg in an individual event), or even to have an 'anything goes' evening as long as it is always clear exactly what is and is not allowed.

In summary, the Levels are as follows:

Simple Systems

Level 2: Natural or strong club methods only, only natural pre-empts.

Level 3: A Strong 1♦ opening and the Multi 2♦ are allowed; and there is much more freedom to play sophisticated methods later in the auction.

Level 4: Polish club is now permitted, along with a wide range of unusual pre-empts.

Level 5: Anything that can be played in a WBF event, as long as it is not 'Highly Unusual' or 'Brown Sticker', plus a few other things such as the Multi 2♦.

Once you know the Level for a club night, a glance at the summary here will give you a good idea of what is allowed. If you want to play some more unusual methods, the Appendix gives a full list of exactly what is allowed, while the Orange Book gives detailed guidance.

Regulated Calls

Apart from in Simple Systems events, only the first round of the auction is regulated. Once the auction gets back to the player who opened, any agreements are allowed.

Any call that is game forcing is allowed. In addition, you can play whatever you like, as either the opening or the defending side:

- ♣ after any two-level or higher opening,
- ♣ after your opponents have opened with a forcing bid, whatever its strength,
- ♣ after your opponents have opened or responded with an artificial bid (eg opening 1♣ that may be a doubleton, or a forcing 1NT response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening),
- ♣ after the bidding has reached 4NT or above,
- ♣ after any call that is game-forcing from strength.

Unless specified otherwise, any bid may be played either as forcing or as non-forcing.

You can agree to include additional restrictions on the meanings of bids, eg a 1NT opening may not have a singleton, or a 1♥ opening must have 5+ cards (there are special rules for the Multi 2♦).

'Strong' Bids

The EBU defines a special meaning for 'Strong'. A Strong bid has 16+ HCP, or has opening-bid values and at least eight clear-cut tricks, or satisfies the 'rule of 25' ie the sum of HCP and the lengths of the two longest suits is at least 25. These rules may refer to openings or overcalls being Strong – that is this precise definition of 'Strong'.

As an example, this rule means that you cannot agree to open a Benjamin 2♣ (showing an Acoll Two in any suit) with a hand such as

♠ KQJ1082	or	♠ 53
♥ A10		♥ AKQ10842
♦ KQ5		♦ 2
♣ 43		♣ A86

as neither of these is Strong under the above definition. If you do so, and the TD decides that this was an agreed part of your system, your result on the hand may be cancelled. If you wish, you can open the first hand 2♠, and the second 2♥, as long as these are announced as “Intermediate to Strong”.

Natural Bids

Any bid that is natural is always permitted (subject to restrictions on the strength of opening bids): ie it has no special artificial meaning and either

- ♦ promises at least four cards in the suit bid, or
- ♦ is a raise of, or preference for, partner’s suit, or
- ♦ is a non-forcing NT bid suggesting sufficient strength to play at the level bid, or is a NT bid showing a roughly balanced hand of an agreed range.

Consequently, ‘Canapé’ methods (where a shorter suit is systemically bid before a longer one) are usually allowed as long as the shorter suit is always at least four cards. The OB also gives some situations where bidding a 3-card suit is considered “natural”, such as an opening 1♣ or 1♦ bid that may be short.

Some natural bids may still need to be alerted if the strength or forcing/non-forcing nature is unusual or they have some other potentially unexpected meaning.

Other Natural Calls

A natural pass is always allowed, ie one that is non-forcing, or is forcing but does not promise any additional values. You may not play that an initial pass promises values.

Except for the immediate double of a natural one-level opening, you can play any meaning for any double. You may always have any meaning for a redouble.

Simple Systems

Some events, typically individuals or for relatively inexperienced players, may have very restrictive system regulations. The EBU suggest that printed convention cards are provided (electronic versions are available on the EBU website) and that it is made clear whether players are allowed to make any changes to the recommended system.

The following list approximates to the EBU Simple System convention card. In addition, any call that is part of old-fashioned simple Acol is usually allowed.

(a) Basic system

Natural 1-level suit openings (1♣ either natural or prepared).

1NT a three-point range between 12 and 18 HCP (which may vary with vulnerability).
Responses to 1NT: Stayman 2♣ and either 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ Weak or 2♦, 2♥ Transfers.

For two-level openings, mix and match from the following options:

- (a) 2♣ Acol (with a 2♦ negative response) together with strong, natural openings in the other suits (with a 2NT negative response), or
- (b) 2♣ Acol (with a 2♦ negative response) together with natural weak twos in the other suits (with a 2NT enquiry response), or
- (c) 2♣ and 2♦ Benjamin Twos (with step 1 as the negative response) together with natural weak twos in the majors (with a 2NT enquiry response)

Responses to 2NT: Either Stayman 3♣ or Baron 3♠;
Either 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ Natural or 3♦, 3♥ Transfers

Slam bidding: Blackwood, Gerber, and 5NT Grand Slam Force

(b) Defensive Bidding

Take-out doubles of an opponent's suit, before partner has bid or doubled.
Any defence to pre-empts.

(c) Leads, signals and discards

A or K from AKx, otherwise the highest from touching honours.
From length to an honour, lowest from three cards, fourth highest from four or more.
From suits without an honour, any of (a) the highest card, (b) the second highest from three or more, (c) the fourth highest from four or more and either top or second from three small.

Signals on partner's lead, signals on declarer's lead and discards:

High-low shows either an even number of cards or encouragement.

Low-high shows either an odd number of cards or discouragement.

When a card would be generally understood to have a suit preference meaning, such as when it is led for partner to ruff, then this is allowed.

Level 2 - Summary

General

Only the first round of the auction is regulated. Once the auction gets back to the player who opened, any agreements are allowed. Any call that is natural is always permitted, subject to restrictions on the strength of opening bids.

1-Level Opening Bids and Responses

A one-level opening bid must either have 11+ HCP, or have 8+ HCP and satisfy the 'rule of 19', ie HCP plus the combined length of its two longest suits must be 19 or more.

An opening 1NT must be non-forcing. It may have any agreed range with at least 10 HCP and be balanced or semi-balanced (ie no singleton or void and no 7-card suit).

Within those constraints you can play any common English system eg:

- ♥ 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 (eg Standard American, Standard French, Two-Over-One)
- ♥ A Strong club, possibly with a nebulous 1♦ opening (eg Precision, Blue Club, Nottingham Club)

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

Two-Level Opening Bids

Any opening that promises 4+ cards in the suit opened is allowed, as is any Strong meaning or meanings (eg Acol twos, Lucas or Weak twos, Benjamin twos, a Precision 2♣ opening). A two-level opening showing a three-suiter with length in the suit opened is also allowed. Two of a suit may instead show an opening bid with a three-suiter short in the suit opened (such as the Precision 2♦ opening).

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

Other Conventional Openings

A 3NT opening may show a solid minor. You may use 4♣ and/or 4♦ as 'South African Texas' (4♣ showing a good 4♥ opening, 4♦ a good 4♠ opening). In addition a 3♣ opening may be played as 5-5 in the minors, any strength, or 6+clubs with a four-card major, denying 3+ cards in the other major, any strength.

Defensive Bidding

You can play whatever you like after an artificial one-level opening (not promising at least three cards in the suit opened), or any forcing or two-level or higher opening. You can also play any methods after an artificial response to a one-level opening bid, or after opener's suit is raised by responder.

You may use jump overcalls in a suit, NT overcalls (jump or not) or cue-bids (jump or not) to show two-suiters (any range, and any suits, as long as at least one of the suits is specified). A 2NT overcall can also be used to show any Strong two-suiter without having to specify either suit.

A double of a natural opening bid or response must be either takeout or penalty. A 1NT overcall in second seat can also be used instead as a takeout bid.

You can play anything after partner's 1NT overcall or a two-suited bid. Otherwise overcalls and responses to second seat overcalls must be natural.

Defending against 1NT

Double must either be for penalties, show at least one specific suit of 4+ cards, or show a three-suiter with one (or more) suits specified.

Two-level overcalls must promise at least one specific suit (2NT can 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'). All other overcalls or responses to second seat overcalls must be natural.

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.)

Leads, Signals and Discards

Any system of leads, signals and discards may be used as long as the convention card gives reasonable detail, with two specific restrictions:

1. Dual-meaning signals are not permitted when following suit. For example, it is not allowed to give one message (eg attitude) according to whether the card is odd or even, and another message (eg suit preference) according to whether the card is high or low. Dual-meaning discards are permitted.
2. Encrypted carding is not permitted (don't worry if you don't know what this means as you are very unlikely to be playing it unknowingly).

Level 3 Summary

At Level 3, restrictions only apply

- ♥ To opening bids
- ♥ After a natural opening one-level suit bid on your right
- ♥ In fourth seat, after a natural one-level suit opening and natural response, with partner passing.

1-Level Opening Bids

A 1-level opening bid must have 8+ HCP. In first or second position it must also satisfy the 'rule of 18', ie the HCP and the combined length of its two longest suits must be 18 or more. An opening 1NT must be non-forcing with any agreed range but at least 9 HCP and roughly balanced (not more than 9 cards in two suits, no void and no seven-card major).

Within those constraints you can play any common English system eg:

- ♠ 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 either better minor or a short club suit (eg Standard American, Standard French, 2/1 ('two-over-one game forcing')).
- ♠ A Strong club, possibly with a nebulous 1♦ opening (eg Precision, Blue Club, Nottingham Club).

A short 1♣ or 1♦ opening may systemically be made on a singleton with a 4441 shape, or with a singleton or void together with length in the other minor.

Some other more unusual systems are also permitted (see the Appendix), but Polish Club is not allowed at Level 3.

2-Level and Higher Opening Bids

Any opening that promises 4+ cards in the suit opened is allowed, as is any Strong meaning or meanings (eg Acol twos, Lucas twos, Weak twos, Benjamin twos, a Precision 2♣ opening).

In addition, the following special openings are allowed:

- ♣ 2♣ or 2♦ showing both majors (any agreed range)
- ♣ 2NT showing both minors (any agreed range)
- ♣ Two of a suit showing a three-suiter including 3+ cards in the suit opened
- ♣ Two of a suit showing a three-suiter, values for an opening one of a suit, and short in the suit opened
- ♣ The 'Multi' 2♦ is permitted, where a 2♦ opening shows either a weak hand with a major or one of various Strong hands.

A few artificial three- and four-level openings are also included at Level 3, including 'South African Texas' where a 4♣/4♦ opening shows a strong 4♥/4♠ opening respectively, and the 'gambling' 3NT. See the Appendix for a full list.

Defensive Bidding

You can play whatever you like after an artificial one-level opening (not promising at least three cards in the suit opened), any forcing opening, or any opening of 1NT or higher. You can also play any methods after an artificial response, or after opener's suit is raised by responder. **A natural, non-forcing 1NT overcall has the same shape restrictions as a 1NT opening bid.**

You may use jump overcalls in a suit, NT overcalls (jump or not) or cue-bids (jump or not) to show two-suiters (any range, and any suits, as long as at least one of the suits is specified). A 2NT overcall can also be used to show any Strong two-suiter without having to specify either suit.

Transfer overcalls are permitted. Double, any suit or NT overcall can show a specified suit, or can show a balanced hand; the hand must be at least as strong as traditionally played for a natural overcall. Otherwise, a double of a natural opening bid or response must be either takeout or penalty. **In second seat, any of a 1NT overcall, a simple cue-bid or a 2♣ overcall can be used instead as a takeout bid (see the Appendix for strength and shape restrictions).**

A few other more unusual methods are also permitted, see the Appendix if you are interested in playing something else.

Leads, Signals and Discards

Any system of leads, signals and discards may be used as long as the convention card gives reasonable detail, with two specific restrictions:

1. Dual-meaning signals (when following suit) are not permitted. For example, it is not allowed to give one message (eg attitude) according to whether the card is odd or even and another message (eg suit preference) according to whether the card is high or low. Dual-meaning discards are permitted.
2. No form of encrypted carding is permitted (don't worry if you don't know what this means as you are very unlikely to be playing it unknowingly).

Level 4 Summary

At Level 4, restrictions only apply

- ♦ To opening bids
- ♦ After a natural opening one-level suit bid on your right
- ♦ In fourth seat, after a natural one-level suit opening and natural response, with partner passing.

One-Level Opening Bids

A one-level opening bid must have 8+ HCP. In first and second position it must also satisfy the 'rule of 18' ie the HCP and the combined length of its two longest suits must be 18 or more. A 1♥ or 1♠ opening must show at least four cards in that suit. An opening 1NT may be non-forcing, any agreed range but at least 9 HCP and roughly balanced (no more than 9 cards in two suits, no void and no seven-card major).

Within those constraints you can play any system which is one of, or a combination of, the following:

- ♥ 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 either better minor or a short (2+) club suit (eg Standard American, Standard French, 2/1).
- ♥ A 1♣ opening which is forcing and is either any Strong hand, or natural, or balanced, or any 4441 (the Polish or Baltic Club).
- ♥ Any 1-level opening to show a Strong hand (forcing, with any combination of meanings) (eg Precision, Strong diamond, Romex 1NT) together with a nebulous 1♣ or 1♦ opening (**a 1♥ or 1♠ opening must still promise four cards in that suit**)
- ♥ A 1NT opening which is at least 'rule of 18' and either specifies at least one 4+ card suit; or promises a three-suiter.

Any short 1♣ or 1♦ opening may systemically be made on a singleton with a 4441 shape, or potentially with a singleton or void together with length in the other minor.

Two-Level Openings

Any combination of weak and Strong options can be played as long as either:

- ♥ **None of the weak options promises 4+ cards in the suit bid, nor may systemically have more cards in the suit bid than in the suit specified by the opening,** or
- ♥ There is one specific suit of 4+ cards included in every weak option (eg all show 4+ hearts)

Where the suit opened is not promised by any of the weak options, opener might happen coincidentally to have length in that suit.

A 'multi' 2NT is also allowed, as long as there is either one specific suit which is promised by all the weak options, or one specific suit which is excluded by all of the weak options.

Three-Level Openings

Three-level openings can have any meaning as long as they promise 4+ cards in the suit opened. In addition, there are two additional types of three-level opening permitted:

- ♥ Any **one** of: a specific suit; one of two suits neither of which is the suit opened; a specified two-suiter; an unspecified solid suit with or without outside strength.
- ♥ A specified one-suiter or any mixture of Strong meanings.

A 3NT opening may show either an unspecified solid suit (with or without outside strength), or a one-suiter either with the suit known, or one of two possible suits.

Four-Level Suit Openings

4♣ and/or 4♦ may be used as South African Texas (showing a good 4♥/4♠ opening respectively). 4♣ and/or 4♦ can instead be used to show an unspecified solid or semi-solid major with or without outside high cards.

Defensive Bidding

Remember that you can play whatever you like after an artificial one-level opening (not promising at least three cards in the suit opened), any forcing opening, or any opening of 1NT or higher. You can also play any methods after an artificial response to a one-level opening bid, or after opener's suit is raised by responder. **A natural, non-forcing 1NT overcall has the same shape restrictions as a 1NT opening bid.**

You may use jump overcalls in a suit, NT overcalls (jump or not) or cue-bids (jump or not) to show two-suiters (any range, and any suits, as long as at least one of the suits is specified). A 2NT overcall can also be used to show any Strong two-suiter without having to specify either suit.

Transfer overcalls are also permitted. Double, any suit or NT overcall can show a specified suit, or can show a balanced hand; the hand must be at least as strong as is traditionally played for a natural overcall. Otherwise, a double of a natural opening bid or response must be either takeout or penalty. **In second seat, any of a 1NT overcall, a simple cue-bid or a 2♣ overcall can be used instead as a takeout bid (see the Appendix for strength and shape restrictions).**

A few other more unusual methods are also permitted, see the Appendix if you are interested in playing these.

Leads, Signals and Discards

Any system of leads, signals and discards may be used as long as the convention card gives reasonable detail, with two specific restrictions:

1. Dual-meaning signals (when following suit) are not permitted. For example, it is not allowed to give one message (eg attitude) according to whether the card is odd or even and another message (eg suit preference) according to whether the card is high or low. Dual-meaning discards are permitted.
2. No form of encrypted carding is permitted (don't worry if you don't know what this means as you are very unlikely to be playing it unknowingly).

Level 5 Summary

Level 5 is only used by the EBU for a small number of prestigious events, such as the Tollemache Cup. It follows the WBF system regulations. The main agreements that are **not** allowed are:

- ♠ One-level opening bids on 7 HCP or fewer, or systems where pass is stronger than a one-level opening.
- ♠ Two- or three-level weak openings which do not have a specified anchor suit, other than the Multi 2♦ **and bids already allowed at Level 4.**
- ♠ Overcalls of a natural opening bid which do not have a specified anchor suit, or show a balanced hand.
- ♠ Any form of encrypted carding.

There are some other restrictions on one-level opening bids, see the Appendix if you are interested in playing something unusual.