

The New Gray Card

Despite the ACBL's requirement for completely filled out convention cards to be displayed, and despite articles in ACBL's *Bridge Bulletin* describing in detail how to fill them out, in Los Angeles many spur-of-the-moment and regular partners display no convention cards at all, and most of those that are displayed are not filled out completely. Many players who can execute a double squeeze or a trump coup find it too difficult to fill out a convention card accurately.

I propose to make filling out a convention card easier by changing that card. I call the new card a *Gray Card*. It differs from the current card by supplying *default* agreements and showing them in gray. If my proposal is adopted, players will have no more excuses for violating the rules, as they do now with impunity, claiming, "I left my convention card at home," "It's in the car," or (indignantly) "It's in my purse." Instead, when they grab private scorecards from the stack that every club and tournament supplies, they will have convention cards that reflect the current opinion of the ACBL leadership as to what "Standard American" methods are.

Why a *gray* card? Because gray can be overwritten easily in black. Likewise, pastel colors ("rose" instead of red and sky blue instead of blue) can be used for alertable and announceable calls. Each pair can either display its own convention card (perhaps a facsimile of the ACBL convention card produced by some computer program) *or* use (and modify to taste) the Gray Card. There are four different kinds of things players mark on convention cards:

(1) Required definitions. Typically, these are *ranges* for bids, such as "1NT/1♣," normally expressed in terms of high-card strength on the usual scale (a hand of "average" strength being indicated as 10 HCP). However, these may also be *meanings* of bids. For example, a pair that uses Jacoby Transfers must specify a meaning for a 2♠ response to a 1NT opening.

(2) Required choices. Typically, these are lined up horizontally and one of three must be chosen. For example, in the section headed "OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE," three boxes appear in the row for "Jump Shift" and a pair must choose "Forcing," "Inv." or "Weak." However, the required choices may also be lined up vertically. For example, in the section headed "DIRECT CUEBID," three boxes appear in the column under "[OVER:] Minor" and a pair must choose "Natural," "Strong T/O" or "Michaels."

(3) Checkoffs of well-known conventions and treatments. Examples include announceable conventions such as Jacoby Transfers; alertable conventions, such as "New Minor Forcing" over a 1NT rebid; and non-alertable treatments, such as "Frequently bypass 4+♦" in response to 1♣.

(4) Free-form descriptions of less well-known conventions and treatments, such as "Mathe Asking Bids," and "Leaping Michaels" over opposing Weak 2♥ and 2♠ openings.

The ACBL's Yellow Card may have been designed to serve some of the same purposes as the Gray Card, but it is far too sketchy, failing to provide information that appears on the regular ACBL Convention Card. Actually, I believe, the regular ACBL Convention Card is too sketchy also. For that reason, I have sketched a New Gray Card.

The New Gray Card specifies, in gray, rose or sky blue, the required definitions and choices. For each checkoff of a well-known convention or treatment, it will have a box filled in (though an "x" or a "y" would do equally well) if chosen. Without recommending the ACBL Yellow Card, I have filled out a New Gray Card that purports to adhere to its conventions and treatments.

Every pair, of course, will find different things to change on the New Gray Card. To reject a default, the pair may simply draw a line through it. To reject a range or description, the pair may substitute its own range or description by overwriting it. However, in the absence of any partnership discussion, the defaults will be in place to specify partnership methods. Regardless, each pair will need to do *less* work in filling out a New Gray Card than is now required to fill out the current form of the ACBL Convention Card. More significantly, if a pair does not provide its own filled-out convention card, the New Gray Card will determine its partnership methods; there will be no reason to say "no partnership agreement" about the meanings of commonplace calls, nor any reason to suspect private understandings in such instances. If the New Gray Card (as I have tried to draw it) conforms to the Yellow Card, then clubs and tournaments will not have to stock the Yellow Card at all.

The New Gray Card need not be unique. Other national bridge organizations may and should adopt their own Gray Cards, reflecting "Standard French" or "Standard Dutch" as the case may be. Or the ACBL might choose to provide more than one New Gray Card, e.g. one for "Standard American" and a second for Two-Over-One Game Force.

Here is the New Gray Card, subject to editing, revision and more masterful graphic design. I have made changes to the current ACBL Convention Card to make "standard" treatments more explicit and add details I think desirable. However, it's not carved in stone, so the current ACBL Convention Card, when filled out with defaults in gray, may be used as an Old Gray Card, or some other kind of Gray Card may be adopted by the ACBL.

FULL NAMES

GENERAL APPROACH

Sound, Natural and Standard ■ minimum opening: balanced 12 HCP or unbalanced 10 HCP

Two Over One: promises rebid ■ game force □ except □ _____

FORCING OPENING 1♣ □ 2♣ ■ 2♦ □ Other □ _____

NOTRUMP OPENINGS (2NT: after 2/1 12 to 14 by 2♣ opener 22 to 24 opening 20 to 21)

1NT 15 to 17 3♣ invitational

1NT to 3♦ invitational

5♥ ■ 5♠ ■ common 3♥ slammish

2♣ Stayman ■ ♥ 1st 3♠ slammish

Puppet 2♣ □ 4♣ Gerber

2♦ → ♥ ■ 4♦ → ♥ 4♥ → ♠ 4♠ _____

Forcing Stayman □ Smolen □

2♥ → ♠ ■ vs. overcall: Lebensohl □ (____ denies)

2♠ shows ♣ or ♦ Neg. Dbl. □ thru _____

2NT natural other _____ vs. dbl.: _____

RESPONSES TO 2NT Puppet 3♣ □

3♦ → ♥ ■ 3♥ → ♠ ■ 3♠ shows ♣ or ♦

4♣ Gerber 4♦ → ♥ 4♥ → ♠ 4♠ _____

3NT Opening 25 to 27 Responses:

4♣ Stayman 4♦ → ♥ 4♥ → ♠ 4♠ ♣ or ♦

Conventional _____

MAJOR OPENINGS expected minimum lengths

1st/2nd 1♥ 5 1♠ 5

3rd/4th 1♥ 5 1♠ 5

MINOR OPENINGS

1♠ 3 artificial □ forcing □ HCP +

1♦ 3 artificial □ forcing □ HCP +

RESPONSES

RESPONSES

Inv. ■ (3+) Weak □

Inv. ■ (3+) Weak □

Splinter □ 2NT □ 3NT ■

other □ _____

1NT: Forcing □ Semi- Forcing □

2NT: natural ■ 13 to 15 HCP

3NT: natural □ to HCP

Drury: original □ reverse □ 2♦ □

←Double Raise→

←(after overcall)→

←Forcing Raise→

Inv. ■ Weak □

Inv. ■ Weak □

Single raise □ Splinter □ JS other minor □

other □ _____

1♦ resp denies major □ unless G/F □

1NT/1♣ 8 to 10 HCP

2NT 11 to 12 HCP may have major □

3NT 13 to 15 HCP

Other

2♣ Opening Strong Artif. ■ minimum HCP if balanced 22 if unbalanced 20

2♦ Resp.: Neg. □ Waiting ■ Artif. Pos □ 2♥ Resp.: Neg. □ Natural Pos. ■ Artif. Pos □

2nd Neg. by 2♦ responder: cheaper minor ■ other □ _____

2♣ Opening Natural □ to HCP length promised: to 2♦ Resp. asks major □ Other □ _____

Natural Weak Two-Bids: 2♦ ■ 2♥ ■ 2♠ ■ 5 to 11 HCP

Suit strength KQ, QJ10 or better 3rd seat frisky ■

4-cd major? no 5-cd minor? no Void? no

RESPONSES New suit: Force UPH ■ NF □

2NT: asks feature if max ■ Ogust □

Other □ _____

2♦ Not Weak: Flannery □ Strong □ _____ 3-suited □ to HCP Other □ _____

RESPONSES

OTHER CONV. CALLS Jump Shift: GF ■ Inv. □ Weak □ In Comp.: GF ■ Inv. □ Weak □

Checkbacks: over 1NT rebid New Minor □ 2♣ □ Other □ _____ over 2NT jump □ _____

Responder's Rebids: 4th suit artificial, forcing: 1 round ■ game □ except _____ Single jumps: force □ inv ■

Opener's Reverse: Forcing ■ Promises Rebid ■ Promises Extras after 2/1 □

SPECIAL DOUBLES

Of overcall: Negative ☐ thru 2♠, penalty ☐ 3♣ up
Of raised opening: Responsive ☐ thru ____
(3-card) Support Db1 ☐ **Rdbl** ☐ thru ____
Offshape T/O ☐ Eq. Lev. Conv. ☐ Maximal ☐

SIMPLE OVERCALL

expected min. 1-level 2-level
length: 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐
strength: 8 to 16 HCP 8 to 16 HCP

Advances

New Suit: Forcing ☐ NF Const ☐ NF ☐
Jump Raise: Forcing ☐ Inv. ☐ Weak ☐
Cuebid: Forcing ☐ LR+ ☐ Jump Cue = LR+ ☐

SINGLE JUMP OVERCALL

Strong ☐ **Intermediate** ☐ **Weak** ☐

OPENING PREEMPTS

expected min. 3-level 4-level
length: 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐
tricks: 7 vul 6 NV 8 vul 7 NV

Conv. Resp. _____

DIRECT CUEBID

	OVER: Artif.	Minor	Major
Natural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong T/O	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michaels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other 2-suited (describe)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

ACE OR KEY-CARD ASKS Gerber ☐ over 1NT, 2NT Blackwood ☐ RKC ☐ 1430 ☐ a la Kantar ☐
Kickback ☐ four of minor ☐ vs. interference: D0P1 thru ____ ☐ then DEPO ☐ R0P1 ☐

OPENING LEADS (circle card, if not in bold)

versus suits		versus notrump	
x x	x x x x	x x	x x x x
x x x	x x x x x	x x x	x x x x x
A K x	10 9 x	A K J x	A Q J x
K Q x	K J 10 x	A J 10 9	A 10 9 x
Q J x	K 10 9 x	K Q J x	K Q 10 9
J 10 9	Q 10 9 x	Q J 10 x	Q 10 9 x
K Q 10 9	10 9 x x	J 10 9 x	10 9 x x

Spot-card leads from length:
4th highest ☐ ☐
3rd/even, low/odd ☐ ☐
lower = more encouraging ☐

Primary signal to partner's leads:

attitude ☐ count ☐ suit preference ☐

NOTRUMP OVERCALLS

Direct 1NT 15 to 18 System On ☐ Cue to force ☐
Balance 1NT 10 to 15 System On ☐ Cue to force ☐
Conv. ☐ _____
Jump to 2NT: Minors ☐ 2 lowest unbid ☐
Other ☐ _____

DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP

vs: all _____
Dbl: penalty _____
2♣ _____
2♦ _____
2♥ _____
2♠ _____
Other _____

OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE

New Suit Forcing: 1-level ☐ 2-level ☐
Single Jump Shift: Forcing ☐ Inv. ☐ Weak ☐
Redouble denies 4-card support ☐
Artificial Raises of major of minor
Weak 2NT ☐
Inv. or better 2NT ☐ 2NT ☐ J/S minor ☐
Other _____

vs Opposing Preempts

Double is Takeout ☐ thru 4♠, Penalty ☐ 4♥ up
Conv. T/O _____
Lebensohl/Db1 of Weak Two-Bid ☐
Leaping Michaels ☐
Other _____

DEFENSIVE CARDING AND SIGNALS

	vs SUITS	vs NT
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
except <input type="checkbox"/>		
Upside-Down: count	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FIRST DISCARD

Odd encourages ☐
Even ☐ Any ☐ discourages and shows suit pref

OTHER CARDING

Smith Echo ☐ ☐
Foster Echo ☐ ☐
Trump suit preference ☐

SPECIAL CARDING, PLEASE ASK ☐