

Blue Book Section 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.
- 5 A 3 A partnership may define the strength of a hand using any method of hand evaluation that will be understood easily by its opponents (High Card Points (HCP), Playing tricks, Losing Trick Count, etc). Regardless, your understandings must meet the permitted minimums defined in terms of HCP and 'Rule of 18/19/24/25' (see 7B1 and 7B3).
- 5 A 4 Players who have an understanding to make calls which have no specified meaning ('random' calls) must take great care over disclosure, particularly of negative inferences, and such players will be ruled against unless a TD is completely satisfied that the understandings have been fully disclosed.

These are only allowed in positions where there is no restriction on permitted methods.

- 5 A 5 A partnership may play two basic systems at different positions or vulnerabilities only in Level 4 or Level 5 competitions, and only where rounds are of 7 boards or more. The partnership must display two system cards for each system, indicating the occasions when the different systems apply.

It is always permitted to vary certain parts of a system according to position and/or vulnerability. This includes, for example, variable NT openings and playing four or five card majors in different positions.

- 5 A 6 A partnership may play any number of different basic systems in one event provided that they play only one system against any given opposing partnership (other than as permitted by 5A5).

5 B 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. There are thus 40 HCP in total in any one deal.

5 C Rule of 19 (and Rule of 18, 24, 25)

- 5 C 1 A method of hand valuation calculated by adding the HCP to the sum of the number of cards in the two longest suits. It is used for defining the agreed strength – normally the minimum strength – which is permitted for various bids, most commonly opening bids.

- 5 C 2 Example

	(A)	(B)
	♠ J 8 4 3 2 ♥ 3 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ K 6 5 4	♠ A J 8 7 2 ♥ 6 ♦ K J 9 3 2 ♣ 8 6
High Card Points:	8	9
No. of cards in longest suit:	5	5
No. of cards in 2nd longest suit:	4	5
Total value by 'Rule of 19':	17	19

5 RULES FOR PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS

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 (B), but not on (A).

5 C 3 Strong openings are often described as 'Extended Rule of 25' or 'Extended Rule of 24' which means the minimum allowed is any one or more of:

- (a) any hand of at least 16 HCP, or
- (b) any hand meeting the Rule of 25 (or Rule of 24 where applicable), or
- (c) subject to proper disclosure, a hand that contains at least the normal high-card strength associated with a one-level opening and at least eight clear cut tricks.

Clear-cut tricks are defined as tricks expected to make opposite a void in partner's hand with the second best suit break.

♠ A K Q J x x x x ♥ x x ♦ x x ♣ x does count as 8 clear-cut tricks

♠ A K Q x x x x x ♥ x x ♦ x x ♣ x does not

Hands conforming to the 'Extended Rule of 25' are described as 'ER25'.

Hands conforming to the 'Extended Rule of 24' are described as 'ER24'.

Further examples:

AKQxxxxx (7CCT), KQJxxxx (5), AQJ98xx (5), KQJTx (3), KQJTxxx (6), AKT9xxxxx (8), KJTxxx (2)

5 D Variations

5 D 1 It is generally allowed to vary a permitted understanding by making it more restrictive. Thus if a certain 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 E Legal control of non-conventional bids

5 E 1 The EBU designates all understandings that it regulates as 'special partnership understandings'. See Law 40B.

5 E 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
- (d) A partnership may **not** agree to open at the one level on hands weaker than as allowed by 6C and 7A3.