

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 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, [controls](#) and 'Rule of 18/19' ([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) and Controls**

HCP are 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.

[An Ace is counted as two controls and a King one. There are 12 controls in any one deal.](#)

5 C **Rules of 18 and 19**

- 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	♠ 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 19':	17	19

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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 To be considered a 'Strong' opening bid or overcall, the minimum allowed by agreement is either or both of:

- (a) any hand of at least 16 HCP
- (b) any hand of at least 12 HCP with at least five controls.

Partnerships may agree that an artificial opening (such as 2♣) may be made with a hand that would not historically have been considered worthy of a forcing opening, such as a balanced or semi-balanced hand with fewer than 18 HCP, or a hand with a lot of playing strength but limited high cards (such as eight solid spades and little else). This must be disclosed clearly. For example, the opening could be described as "Either a strong hand or eight playing tricks in a major". This applies even if the minimum agreed strength is in line with (b) above.

There is no restriction on the strength of a natural two-level or higher opening bid but similar requirements for full disclosure apply.

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 **Regulation of natural 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.**