

7 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: LEVEL 4

7 A **General**

7 A 1 The only methods regulated are a player's initial pass, opening bids below 3NT and immediate overcalls. From responder's first call onwards all partnership understandings are permitted.

7 A 2 *Pass*

A pass before any player has bid must not show, or usually have, any values

A pass directly after a natural, non-forcing one-level suit opening bid must not show, or usually have, any values.

7 A 3 *Strength of Opening One-level Bids*

A one-level opening bid in a suit, whether forcing or not, must by agreement show 8+ HCP and, in first and second position, follow the Rule of 18. Natural 1NT opening bids must show 9+ HCP.

7 B **One Level Openings**

7 B 1 *1♣ and 1♦ openings*

1♣ or 1♦ may each be played to have any **one** of options (i)-(iv) below

(i) Forcing or not, showing any combination of the following hand types:

a) At least four cards in the suit bid

b) At least four cards in the other minor

c) Any distribution that satisfies the requirements for a natural 1NT opening (see 7B3(i) below)

(ii) Forcing, with any meaning or meanings as long as they all show at least 16 HCP or 12+ HCP with at least 5 controls

(iii) *Any meaning showing at least four cards in a specified suit, forcing or not

(iv) *A combination of both (i) and (ii) above ('Polish Club' or 'Three-Way Club')

7 B 2 *1♥ and 1♠ openings*

Any meaning is permitted which shows 4 (or more) cards in the suit opened.

7 B 3 *1NT opening*

1NT may be played as any **one** of the following

(i) Natural, non-forcing with a continuous defined range. A 'natural' 1NT opening has no more than nine cards in two suits, no void, and does not have seven hearts or seven spades. The range must be the same when holding a singleton

(ii) Any meaning or meanings as long as they all show a strong hand (16+ HCP or 12+ HCP with at least 5 controls)

(iii) *A three-suited hand (5440, 5431 or 4441), the shortage need not be specified

(iv) *Any meaning showing at least four cards in a specified suit, forcing or not

* These agreements were historically not permitted at Level 3. See section 8.

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7 C **Opening Bids from 2♣ to 3♠ inclusive**

7 C 1 *General, including 'Multi' style opening bids*

These may be played as one or both of (a) and (b) below

- (a) Any meaning or meanings as long as they all show a **strong hand (16+ HCP, or 12+ HCP with at least 5 controls), and/or**
- (b) At most one from the following four options:
 - (i) **One or more** meanings which all show at least four cards in the suit opened, or
 - (ii) **One or more** meanings which all show at least five cards in the same one specified suit, or
 - (iii) **One or more meanings which all show at least 4-4 in the same two specified suits, or**
 - (iv) Any combination of meanings that show either or both of
 - 1) At least five cards in a suit, specified or not, which must not be the suit opened, and/or
 - 2) At least 5-4 in two suits, either or both of which may be specified or not, but both of which must not be the suit opened.

Notes:

- (1) A 'Benji' 2♣ or 2♦ opening (or any other opening with a similar meaning) which may have 'eight playing tricks' in **any** suit must by agreement satisfy (a) above. An agreement to make such a bid on a hand with many playing tricks but limited high card strength, or on a (semi-)balanced hand with fewer than 18 HCP, must be clearly disclosed.
- (2) For an opening bid of 2NT, (b)(i) is not applicable and for (b)(iv) there are no restrictions on which suit(s) may be shown
- (3) There is no limit to the number of types of strong hand included (if any) under (a), nor to the number of hand types, if any, included under (b)(iv)
- (4) Opening suit bids with no 'anchor' suit which may or may not have length in the suit opened are particularly difficult to defend against, which is why they are not permitted. However, players are permitted to open (say) 2♦ showing a weak two in either major while coincidentally also holding diamond length, as long as they have no specific understanding to do so.
- (5) It is permitted to open (say) 2♣ to show an unspecified long suit that is not clubs under (b)(iv) above. If such an opening may contain (for example) a solid eight card major with little outside this should be clearly described and not called simply, 'Strong'.

7 C 2 *Three-suited opening bids*

Alternatively an opening bid of 2♣, 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ may be played as **one** of the following

- (a) A three-suiter (5440, 5431 or 4441) with at least three cards in the suit bid (the shortage need not be specified), minimum strength at least 10 HCP, or
- (b) A three-suiter, short in the suit bid, minimum strength at least 10 HCP.

7 D **Opening Bids of 3NT and higher**

These may have any agreed meaning.

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7 E *Defence to Opening Bids in Second (Direct) Seat*

7 E 1 *General*

Any partnership understandings are permitted after

- (a) an artificial or forcing one-level suit opening (*see 3E1*), or
- (b) an opening bid of 1NT or above.

7 E 2 *Defence to Natural, Non-Forcing Opening Bids of 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠ - General*

Any meaning is permitted for double.

Any meaning is permitted for a jump cue bid (at any level).

Any bid which shows at least four cards in a specified suit is permitted. The quality of the suit and the strength of the hand must conform to the standards generally played for a natural call at the level that would result from bidding the suit at the minimum level now possible (bids showing at least 5-5 in two suits may traditionally be made on very weak hands).

Any bid which shows a semi-balanced hand (i.e. with no singleton, void or seven-card suit) of at least 11 HCP is permitted.

7 E 3 *1NT overcall of a natural non-forcing opening bid of 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠*

A 1NT overcall may, instead of a meaning allowed by **7E2**, be played as any **one** of the following:

- (a) Natural, i.e. no more than nine cards in two suits, no void and no seven-card major, with a defined range and a minimum of at least 9 HCP, or
- (b) A take-out bid (similar to a take-out double) of any agreed strength, or
- (c) **Either* a balanced hand with at least 14 HCP *or* a weak hand with a long suit, or
- (d) *A weak hand with a long suit.

7 E 4 *Other Specific permissions after a one-level opening bid of 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠*

A non-jump cue bid may, instead of a meaning allowed by **7E2**, be played as either one of the following:

- (a) A **strong hand (16+ HCP or 12+ HCP with at least 5 controls)**, any meaning or meanings, or
- (b) A take-out bid (similar to a take-out double) of any agreed strength

A 2NT overcall may be used to show a strong **(16+ HCP or 12+ HCP with at least 5 controls)** two-suiter with no suit specified

A 2♣ overcall may be used to show a 'weak take-out double' with no more than a singleton in the suit opened and at least 3 cards in the other three suits.

7 F *Carding*

7 F 1 Any system of leads, signals and discards may be used as long as the system card gives reasonable detail (*see 3J*), and subject to the specific restrictions in **7F2 and 7F3**.

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7 F 2 *Encrypted carding*

No partnership understanding is permitted whereby the meaning of a lead, signal or discard is based in principle on information not available to declarer, so no form of 'encrypted' carding is permitted.

An agreement may arise typically where dummy has a long suit missing the Ace, and no outside entry, and involves the defender with the Ace of the suit giving a signal along Smith Peter or suit-preference lines, i.e. a signal concerning another suit, while the defender without the Ace gives a count signal. As an exception to the ban on encrypted signals, a count signal is permitted in place of a Smith Peter in such situations provided that the use of the method is fully disclosed.

7 F 3 *Dual meaning signals*

Dual meaning signals (when following suit) are not permitted.

Examples of prohibited dual meaning signals:

- (a) One message (typically attitude) is given according to whether the card played is odd or even; a different message (typically suit preference) is given according to whether the card played is high or low.
- (b) One message (typically attitude) is given if a specific card (say a 6 or a 7) is played; a different message (typically suit preference) is given if any other card is played. It is, however, permitted to use a particular category of card to express doubt or no preference. For example, when giving suit-preference a partnership may agree that a middle card shows no preference between the two suits.

Such dual meanings are permitted for discards.

A common agreement when following suit from known length (five plus cards) is to play a middle card as encouraging and high/low cards as suit preference. This is permitted.

8 PARTNERSHIP UNDERSTANDINGS: OTHER PERMISSIONS

8 A Introduction

8 A 1 The EBU no longer runs events at Level 3 and suggests that, as the differences between Level 3 and Level 4 were minor, that there is no requirement for it. However, clubs and County Associations may wish to continue to run events with permitted understandings in line with the old Level 3, particularly with regard to the range of artificial pre-emptive openings allowed. This section summarises a suitable set of permitted understandings defined partly by identifying those at the current Level 4 that were not permitted at Level 3.

8 A 2 *Comparison to the 'old' Level 3*

The set of permitted partnership understandings described here is mainly in line with Level 3 for opening bids and overcalls. Historically, Level 3 also restricted the meaning of a second seat take-out double and actions in fourth seat. These restrictions have not been included here, for consistency with the changes also made in 2013 to Level 4.

8 B Opening Bids and Overcalls at the One Level

8 B 1 All opening bids and overcalls at the one level permitted at Level 4 are permitted with the exception of those marked with a star (*). *See 7B and 7E3.*

8 C Two-Level and higher Opening Bids

8 C 1 *Opening Bids in a Suit from 2♣ to 3♠*

These may be played as **one** of the following

- (a) Any meaning or meanings as long as they all show a **strong hand (16+ HCP, or 12+ HCP with at least 5 controls)**, or
- (b) Any meaning or meanings which show at least four cards in the suit opened, or
- (c) 2♣ or 2♦ may be played to show at least 4-4 in the majors

8 C 2 *'Multi' 2♦*

A 2♦ opening may be played to contain a weak option and one or two strong options.

(a) Weak option

A defined range of no more than 5 HCP, a minimum strength of 4 HCP and a maximum of 12 HCP. The agreed strength may differ according to position and/or vulnerability.

The suit may be played as either (i) 5+ hearts; or (ii) 5+ hearts or 5+ spades

(b) Strong options

The minimum strength is **16 HCP**. At least one strong option must be of reasonable frequency.

One or two of the following may be played:

- (i) an Acol Two: the suit need not be specified
- (ii) a 4-4-4-1 (or 5-4-4-0) hand, with a defined range; the singleton/void need not be specified
- (iii) a balanced or semi-balanced hand (no singleton, void or seven card suit) with a defined range; alternatively it may be agreed that it may contain a singleton
- (iv) any game forcing hand.