

Mr Bridge

David Stevenson Answers Your Questions on Laws and Ethics

A while ago we had some confusion at the club regarding 1♣ opening bids that people adopt when playing 5-card majors. I wrote to David Stevenson at Mr Bridge. My question and his answer were published in Mr Bridge (issue 176, page 41) and are reproduced below.

Q. When players play a five-card major system, they will open 1♣ or 1♦ to show a hand that denies a five-card major and where the hand is outside their no-trump range. Playing some systems (eg 'better minor'), the player will always have three or more cards in the suit, but this isn't guaranteed in other systems.

Am I correct in thinking that there should always be either an announcement or an alert by those playing five-card majors when they open one of a minor? For example, announce when the suit may be short (eg 'May be two,') and alert when the bid guarantees three or more cards in the suit.

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A. When a pair plays a 1♣ opening which shows normal opening values, but may be on fewer than three cards then it is announced as, 'May be two,' or similar. This systemic approach is getting more common.

When a pair plays a 1♣ opening which shows normal opening values and at least three cards, then it is not alertable or announceable. At the start of a round, players are expected to find out their opponents' basic system. If they are playing five-card majors, then a three-card 1♣ opening bid is to be expected.

While Acol has developed so that a majority of Acol players play a weak 1NT and four-card minors, that is not universal. Acol players who vary their 1NT range often have to open 1♣ or 1♦ on three cards when they have fewer than 15 points.

Overall a three-card minor is fairly common, so it does not constitute a potentially unexpected meaning.