

## Bids and Misbids (Permitted, deviant and psychic bids)

### 1. Introduction

You will certainly have opened the bidding, choosing a bid at the 1, 2, or a higher level, but you may not be aware that these bids are subject to the Handbook of EBU Permitted Understandings known as the Blue Book. There are three levels: Level 2 is for Novice events; Level 4 is for Clubs and Domestic Tournaments; and Level 5 for major or International Tournaments (Levels 1 and 3 are defunct). We normally play all our Bridge at Level 4, and certainly do at Woking Bridge Club.

Please read on to discover what restrictions Level 4 places on our bidding, what we should disclose about our agreements, and what happens if we stray outside the permitted understandings.

### 2. Level 4: What it means for us

The only methods regulated at Level 4 are: a player's initial pass; opening bids below 3NT; and immediate overcalls. From responder's first call onwards, all partnership understandings are permitted. The full regulations may be found at <http://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/blue-book>, and the most frequent infringements at our club are of the rules for 1-level opening bids:

- a) All 1-level suit opening bids must contain 8+ High Card Points (HCP). In addition, in first and second positions, they must also satisfy the Rule of 18 (see \* below).
- b) 1♣ and 1♦ opening bids may not include unbalanced hands with a 5-card or longer major, unless the bid minor is either: (i) at least as long as the major;  
or (ii) forcing in a hand satisfying the Rule of 24 (see \* below).
- c) 1♥ and 1♠ opening bids must show a 4-card or longer holding in the suit bid.
- d) Natural 1NT opening bids must contain at least 9 HCP in one continuous range, no more than 9 cards in two suits, no void, and no 7-card or longer major.

*\* Rule of N means that the HCP added to the lengths of the two longest suits must total at least N.*

### 3. Disclosure of methods

Because Level 4 permits all partnership understandings after responder's first call, it is important that partnerships make their agreements available to their opponents. Each partnership's basic system should be announced when both pairs meet at the table. Both members of each pair should have identical system cards for their opponents to inspect, and all conventional calls on the first round of bidding, or below 3NT in general, must be alerted or announced as appropriate. Regular partnerships are expected to agree and create their system card: several templates are available at <http://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/convention-cards>, and there is a club version on our website within Club Rules & Etiquette. For ad hoc pairings, basic agreements on system and conventions should be entered on the scorecards available at the club.

### 4. What happens if someone bids outside the regulations?

There are three classes of bid that may fall outside those permitted at Level 4:

- a) A Misbid, which is an **inadvertent** mis-statement of honour strength and/or suit length, usually caused by miscounting points or mis-sorting the hand. Following a Misbid, the bidding should continue normally and no attempt should be made to draw attention to it.
- b) A Deviation, which is a **deliberate but minor** mis-statement of honour strength and/or suit length, for example: downgrading a weak 4-3-3-3 15 count and opening a "12-14" 1NT.
- c) A Psyche is a perfectly legal but **deliberate and gross** mis-statement of honour strength and/or suit length primarily to mislead or disrupt the opponents, for example: an understrength suit opening bid at the 1-level in third seat.

A Deviation or Psyche should be just as much a surprise for the bidder's partner as it is for their opponents. A player who allows for their partner to have made a Deviation or Psyche is deemed to have "fielded" the bid, and the partnership may be considered to have a concealed understanding. To monitor this, the club maintains a log of all reported Deviations and Psyches, so it is important to call the Director whenever you think there may have been one at your table.

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5. **Finally**

The aim of this “Ethic of the Month” series is to make our players aware of the day-to-day irregularities which are easily avoided, and thereby reduce the number of calls to the Director.

However, whenever there is any sort of issue at your table, it is important that you do call “Director, please!” and hold up a hand to show the Director from where the call has come. Please do not make your own rulings at the table without calling the Director, regardless of how long you yourself have been playing or directing.

You will also be well equipped if you venture out of the club to play in events at other clubs and in Surrey County or national tournaments, such as at the SCBA AGM. Above all, enjoy your Bridge in the knowledge that we are playing to the best standard of behaviour promoted by the EBU.

David Burch  
2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016