

Rules for 'Strong' opening bids

From August 2017, the Extended Rule of 25 for strong openings has been replaced. The new rule is that 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
(an ace counts as two controls, a king counts as one control) .

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.

So, if you and your partner agree that

♠A10987642 ♥A3 ♦K ♣J2 or ♠AKQJ654 ♥A3 ♦52 ♣52

is good enough for a Benji 2♣ opening, that's fine but when you describe it to your opponents be clear that it may be more like a strong pre-empt than the traditional hand of 'power and quality' with substantial defence.

Abingdon Duplicate Bridge Club
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