

BLUE BOOK UPDATED 2022

New announcements

We are used to announcing “Hearts” or “Spades” when partner responds with a transfer to your 1NT opening bid. Under the new announcements, you also announce “Clubs” or “Diamonds” if a 2S or 2NT response to your 1NT opening is a transfer, showing the suit. But if 2S or 2NT shows both minors, or could be either minor, then the bid is still alerted – only announce if the bid shows just one suit.

In Acol, a 1NT response shows at most 10HCP, and this is not alerted or announced; but for many pairs playing 5-card majors, 1NT can be weaker and/or stronger. If a wide-ranging 1NT response is non-forcing, you announce by saying “up to 11 HCP” or “up to a bad 12”; but if 1NT is forcing it is alerted. Similarly, in Acol, a natural two-level response is forcing but not forcing to game, and this is not alerted or announced; but in “2/1” these natural responses are game forcing and are now announced as “game forcing”.

Announcement of transfer responses has also been extended to responses to a prepared club: as over 1NT, opener names the suit shown by the transfer response. Unlike over 1NT, there is an announcement even if the suit is not necessarily a 5-card suit.

A natural strong 2NT opening bid is no longer announced.

New rules on “strong” and non-strong opening bids

The definition of “strong” opening bid has been changed. For a strong 1C (or strong 1D) the requirement is now 13 or more HCP. For other strong bids (for example, opening 2C or 2D) the requirement is 16 or more HCP, except if there are two suits with 13HCP concentrated in the two suits. The rules for non-strong bids at the two-level and three-level have also been simplified.

Opening Bids

The word count relating to Sections 7C1 and 7C2 in the Blue Book has been much reduced, with references to “controls” and “playing tricks” (PT) removed.

The main four changes (that apply at Level 4) are:

1. **A Strong opening bid at the 1 level may contain as few as 13HCP.** Therefore Strong Clubbers can elect to upgrade Hand A to be a 1♣ opening (currently prohibited because fewer than 5 controls and fewer than 16HCP), whilst Hand B is no longer allowed to be described as a Strong ♣ (because fewer than 13HCP, even though it meets

the current requirements of 5+ controls)

Hand A: S: KQJT9; H: KQT98; D: AT9; C: Void

Hand B: S: Axx; H: Axx; D: Axx; C: xxxx

2. **A Strong 2 level opening bid** must either continue to have at least 16 HCP, alternatively 13 HCP in any 2 suits totalling 10+ cards eg. Hand C is currently prohibited from opening a Strong 2♣, but will now be allowed.

Hand C: S: Void; H: xxx; D:Kx; C:AKQJxxxx

3. **Three categories of Opening Bid at 2/3 level:** either Strong, Natural, or Non-Natural. Any number of meanings if all meanings fall into one of the three categories. Alternatively any number of Strong meanings may be combined with a single Natural or Non-Natural meaning. For example take a typical Multi 2♦ opening described as either:
- Balanced 20-22, or
 - Strong in any suit, or
 - Weak in a major

This combines two Strong options with one non-natural option i.e. fine. However, take care. The following description including “8 PT” has caused uncertainty under the current regulations too. The Multi must not now be described as:

- Balanced 20-22, or
- 8 PT in any suit, or
- Weak in a major

This is not allowed because 8 PT is not necessarily Strong and cannot combine two non-strong meanings with a Strong one. Further, even if you remove the balanced 20-22 option, there is still a problem, because non-strong, non-natural options, such as “8 PT in any suit”, must not lead with the suit opened, in this case ♦s. The advice here is to make sure all Strong opening bids meet the definition of “Strong” (see para 5D1). This gives you many more options.

4. **Natural bids at the 2 level must contain 5+cards;** or if only 4 must specify a second suit.

Other changes and additions to the Blue Book

4D 2 In response to a non-forcing opening bid of one of a suit, a non-forcing 1NT response that can be made on more than 10 HCP is announced. Opener says 'Up to n points', where n is the upper limit for the bid (e.g. 'Up to 11' or 'Up to a bad 12').

4 D 3 In response to a non-forcing 1♣ opening, transfers are announced, but only where there has been no intervention and the bid is not a jump. Opener says 'Hearts' when 1♦ is bid or 'Spades' when 1♥ is bid. If 1♠ shows diamonds, opener says 'Diamonds'; if 1♠ denies a four-card or longer major, opener says 'No major'. If 1NT is forcing and guarantees four cards in a specified minor, opener names that minor. If 2♣ shows diamonds, opener says 'Diamonds'.

4 D 4 In response to a non-forcing opening bid of one of a suit, a new suit without a jump that is natural and forcing to game is announced. Opener says 'Game-forcing'

4 E 3 Transfers at the two level (♦ to ♥, ♥ to ♠, ♠ to ♣ and NT to ♦) are announced, but only in response to a natural 1NT opening where there has been no intervention, and where the transfer shows at least five cards in the suit concerned without any other possible meaning. Opener says 'Hearts' when 2♦ is bid, 'Spades' when 2♥ is bid, 'Clubs' when 2♠ is bid, or 'Diamonds' when 2NT is bid.

4G Announcements – 2NT Openings and Responses

Note: 2NT opening is not announced

Thus now 4G 2 becomes 4G 1 and 4G 3 becomes 4G 2

4 G 1 A Stayman 3♣ bid is announced, but only in response to a natural 2NT opening where there has been no intervention; and only where it is used to ask for a four card major. Opener says 'Stayman'. After such a 3♣ response a 3♦ rebid by opener denying a major does not need an alert. Unusual responses such as opener bidding 3NT or higher or 3♠ showing spades but not denying hearts should be alerted. Stayman is announced whether or not it shows a four card major.

4 G 2 Red suit transfers at the three level, i.e. ♦ to ♥ and ♥ to ♠, are announced, but only in response to a natural 2NT opening where there has been no intervention, and where the transfer shows at least five cards in the major suit concerned. Opener says 'Hearts' when 3♦ is bid, or 'Spades' when 3♥ is bid.

5D 1 has now been rewritten to read....

5 D Rules for “Strong” opening bid

5 D 1 To be considered a “Strong” opening bid, the minimum allowed by agreement is: (a) Opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦: at least 13 HCP (b) Above 1♦: at least 16 HCP, or 13 HCP concentrated in two suits containing 10+ cards.

5 D 2 The rule for “Strong”, in 5D1(b), is also used for artificial overcalls (see 6F2, 6G2, 7E2, 7E4).

And 7C now reads....

7 C Opening Bids from 2♣ to 3♠ inclusive

7 C 1 Suit opening bids These may be played as one or more meanings within (a), or (b), or (c). Alternatively any number of meanings of (a) may be combined with a single meaning from (b) or (c).

(a) Any “Strong” hand (see 5D1(b) above)

(b) Natural, defined as either of the following in the suit opened: (i) 5+ cards, or (ii) 4+ cards if a second suit is also specified

(c) Non-natural, defined as either: (i) Any hand that shows 5+ cards in at least one suit, specified or not, but which must not show 4+ cards in the suit opened, or (ii) Any hand that shows at least 4-4 in two specified suits, neither of which is the suit opened, or (iii) A 3-suited hand (5440, 4441 or 5431) with any specified shortage.

7 C 2

2NT Opening Can be played as any meaning, but if not “Strong”, it must either specify at least one 5+ card suit, or maximum of two possible 5+ card one-suiters.

7 C 3 Notes (1) In all cases players should explain their method by at least stating: • HCP range or equivalent expression of hand strength • Minimum length of longest suit(s) • Forcing or not

(2) Apart from natural single-suiters and a strong balanced 2NT, all other openings (from 2♣ to 3♠ inclusive) are alertable.

(3) It is the responsibility of the pair alerting and explaining to be clear whether or not their agreement conforms to the definition of “Strong”, especially when using terms such as “Benji” or “8 playing tricks” which otherwise may well be understood to show a strong hand. Pairs whose agreements do combine a “Strong” opening bid with weaker hands should be clear which suits are possible in the non-strong options. For example, a 2♣ opening might be described as ‘Either a strong hand or eight playing tricks in a major’; in this case the major

suit options do not have to satisfy the rule in 5D1(b) as they are permitted under 7C1(c)(i).

(4) Pairs that deviate from the “Strong” requirements above will usually be considered to have done so by agreement unless they can demonstrate otherwise.

See the full publication

<https://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/laws-and-ethics/blue-book/blue-book.pdf>