



## Strong Opening Bids – What is allowed Revised 1 August 2017

Effective 1 August 2017 the EBU changed their restrictions on what partnership understandings are allowed for strong opening bids, in particular they removed the concept of the Extended Rule of 25. The purpose of this note is to provide the new requirements and to draw a distinction between legal/illegal bids and allowed partnership understandings.

### Illegal bids

Illegal bids are bids disallowed under the Laws such as:

- Bids out of rotation
- Insufficient bids
- Bids after the final pass of an auction
- Bids when obliged by the Laws to pass.

So in the context of an opening bid the only immediately illegal bid is one that is out of rotation.

### Allowed partnership understandings

However the EBU makes some restrictions on allowed partnership understandings, the details of which can be found in the EBU Blue Book. While it is not illegal *per se* to open with a strong artificial bid on a hand that does not comply with the requirements of the Blue Book, it is not allowed to have a partnership understanding that includes such opening bids.

Effective 1 August 2017 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 (see below).

Partnerships who agree that an artificial opening (such as 2♣) may be made with a hand with a lot of playing strength but limited high cards (such as eight solid spades and little else) must disclose this 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.

### Controls

An Ace counts as two controls and a King as one control.

### **Can I open with an artificial strong bid on a hand that does not meet the “Strong” requirements of the Blue Book?**

You can open with an artificial bid of any strength with a long suit *other* than the suit opened. So you can open a Benji 2♣ showing an “Acol Two” in any suit or a strong balanced hand, as long as if your suit is clubs it has the requisite 16+ points or 12+ points and five controls. Just don’t tell your opponents that you are promising a strong hand if you might have eight solid spades and nothing else.

Other than that, you can do whatever you like, but this must be as much of a surprise to your partner as to your opponents. In other words it must not be consistent with your partnership understanding, whether through explicit agreement or previous experience. Your bid may be a psyche, a mis-bid, or a deliberate deviation from your agreed system. In the case of a psyche this will be obvious to the director and should be recorded as such. In the case of a mis-bid or a deliberate deviation you will need to convince the director of this and that may be difficult if you are not able to provide a convention card that makes your partnership agreement clear.

### **Can I open with a natural strong bid on a hand that does not meet the requirements of the Blue Book?**

Yes. There are no restrictions on permitted partnership agreements for natural 2-level opening bids. However, you are still required to disclose your partnership agreement of the strength of the bid on your convention card and in reply to any question from your opponents.

#### **In summary**

To avoid unnecessary confusion at the table it is best to make sure that all your artificial strong opening bids comply with the requirements of the Blue Book, failing which you should be prepared to have a detailed conversation with the director