

SOUTH AFRICAN BRIDGE FEDERATION

September 2019

REGULATIONS FOR THE CONTROL OF CONVENTIONS

The purpose of these regulations is to create uniformity in the definition of bids and acceptability of conventions throughout the bodies under the jurisdiction of the South African Bridge Federation (SABF) and at tournaments run by such bodies.

These regulations are promulgated under the authority awarded to Sponsoring Organisations in terms of Law 40 and Law 80 of the 2017 Laws of Duplicate Bridge.

During any tournament, these regulations shall be applied by the Tournament Director and in appeals being considered by an Appeals Committee or the Reviewer.

These regulations will be known as the Conventions Control Regulations.

INTERPRETATION

The Executive of the SABF will be the sole interpreter of these regulations. In the event of a dispute about an interpretation of any part of these regulations, the Executive will refer the dispute to individuals and organizations, both local and/or overseas, for clarification leading to an acceptable interpretation.

DEFINITIONS

High card points (HCP)

Calculated on the basis of:

Ace	=	4 points
King	=	3 points
Queen	=	2 points
Jack	=	1 point

Rule of 20 or 18

The agreed minimum value of the hand is that the number of cards in the two longest suits together, when added to the number of HCP in the hand, will total not less than 20 or 18.

Natural and Artificial Calls

“Willingness” to play in a suit means a minimum holding of 4 cards in a major

or 3 cards in a minor when first named by a member of a pair. When directly or indirectly raising a suit first bid by partner, the number of cards held in that denomination may be less than the minimum stipulated above.

Artificial

1. A bid, double, or redouble that conveys information (not being information taken for granted by players generally) other than (or in addition to) a willingness to play in the denomination named or last named.
2. A pass that promises more than a specified amount of strength.
3. A pass that promises or denies values other than in the last suit named as defined in the 2017 Laws of Duplicate Bridge.

Natural

A bid of a suit that indicates willingness to play in that denomination and which says nothing about any other denomination;

or

strength in that suit denomination or at least three cards in that denomination;

or

a bid of no-trumps which indicates willingness to play in NT which shows either a balanced hand or, in response to a suit bid by partner, a hand short in the suit, or suits, bid by partner (later defined more specifically);

or

a pass, double, redouble that indicates willingness to play in the last suit named.

Strong

is to be interpreted within the context of the statement and the subject matter to which it applies, except as shown below.

Normal Opening Bids

The range shall be from a minimum which conforms to the Rule of 20, up to a maximum of 17HCP. This does not preclude the use of a normal opening bid with a stronger hand which is subsequently redefined in the rebid, or conforming to the rule of 18 in third seat.

Weak Bids & Pre-emptive Openings

A weak 2 or 3 opening is deemed to be less than an opening bid. Players must announce their range which should be no more than 6 points, eg 4-9, 6-11. This range does not apply to opening or overcalling in third position as well as after a precision opening by an opponent.

Strong Opening Bids

Minimum HCP range shall be 18 HCP. These ranges are subject to a variance of a point or so either way depending on the texture of a hand in the context of normal bridge situations.

Balanced Hands

Hands of 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 or 5-3-3-2 shape. .Also see page 4 where it pertains to a 1 no-trump opening with 6-3-2-2 shape

Alertable Calls

- a) Any call which, by partnership agreement, contains information of which the opponents may not be aware must be alerted by the partner of the player making such a call and a full explanation given upon request by an opponent. This applies to natural as well as to artificial calls.
- b) Opening bids in a minor suit which contain fewer than three cards are alertable.
- c) Standard Stayman, as defined in these regulations, does not need to be alerted.
- d) Cue-bids above 3NT after suit agreement and ace-asking bids above the 3NT level must be explained, without prompting, after the bidding has been completed and during the clarification period. There is no need to alert when making these bids, unless the opponents are in the bidding.
- e) Artificial bids above 3NT during the first or second round of bidding should be alerted.
- f) Passes that contain a specific meaning at the one or two level should be alerted, e.g. when playing support doubles; 1♣ (p) 1♥ (1♠) p=alert (does not have 4 or 3 ♥).
- g) All doubles need to be alerted when playing with screens.
- h) Doubles at the 1 and 2 level of bidding are assumed to be for takeout and need not to be alerted, except a double of a NT opening which is deemed to be for penalties.
- i) A double at the 3 level or higher that is penalty orientated need NOT be alerted.
- j) All other doubles should be alerted (including those that partially fall within the ambit of the above but carry an additional special meaning which is a partnership agreement, eg support doubles or snapdragon.

One-suiter

A hand containing one suit of at least five or more cards and suggesting no other suit of four or more cards.

Two-suiter

A hand containing at least one suit of five or more cards and another of four or more cards.

Three-suiter

A hand of 4-4-4-1, 5-4-4-0 or 5-4-3-1 shape.

Prepared 1♣ or 1♦

An opening bid of a minor suit that may be shorter than 3 cards, as a first move on a balanced hand. This bid is alertable.

1 No-trump Opening

A No-trump opening or overcall is natural, if by agreement it contains no void, at most one singleton which must be the A, K or Q and no more than two doubletons. If the hand contains a singleton, it may have no doubleton. The 'new' announcement therefore only needs to state the range which may not exceed 4 HCP. Players who overcall NT with a small singleton need to alert this as well as the range.

Limit Raise

A bid which raises the suit bid by partner and says nothing about any other suit. Limited to specific point count.

Change of Suit

A bid which changes the denomination from the suit bid by partner without bypassing a level of bidding. Forcing for one round opposite a partner who has not already passed.

Jump shift

A bid which changes the denomination from the suit bid by partner whilst bypassing a level of bidding. May be played either as forcing or non-forcing, but not both.

Standard Blackwood

In response to a Blackwood 4NT enquiry, the following responses are defined as standard:

- 5♣ indicates 0 or 4 aces;
- 5♦ indicates 1 ace;
- 5♥ indicates 2 aces;
- 5♠ indicates 3 aces.

The same definition applies to a Blackwood 5NT enquiry, but at one level higher

Standard Stayman

Guarantees holding at least one four card major. In response to a Stayman enquiry, the following responses are defined as standard:

- 2♦ indicates no four card Major;
- 2♥ indicates a four card Heart suit;
- 2♠ indicates a four card Spade suit;
and denies a four card Heart suit.

The responses above to the 2♣ Stayman bid are only alertable if they do not conform to the above (such as puppet Stayman or if responder may not hold a 4-card Major – you should alert a 2NT rebid by responder.)

The same definitions apply to a Stayman 3♣ enquiry in response to a natural 2NT opening, but at one level higher.

Other Terms

Any bridge terms not defined above will be considered to conform to normal bridge terminology and definition.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Both members of a pair are required to play an identical system.

Players are required to exchange the following information before commencement of bidding and the respective convention cards should be handed to the opponents:

- a) Basic type of system;
- b) Strength of their opening no-trump bids;

- c) Minimum length for opening bids of a suit;
- d) Forcing opening bids;
- e) Strong or weak opening bids;
- f) Leads;
- g) Signals;
- h) Discards.

Players have the responsibility to find out about their opponents' system of bidding and carding and should ask questions wherever applicable. The onus is upon both pairs to volunteer this information before the start of play. However, if for some reason players do not obtain this information before the start of play, and make enquiries during the bidding or play, then any bid or play based upon information that could have been given by partner's enquiry may be ruled as unauthorized information.

In RED POINT events, identical convention cards containing partnership understandings must be provided by each member of a pair and should be available on the table at all times for use by the opponents. Opponents are expected to avail themselves of the information provided by the convention cards.

For club purposes, a simple convention card containing the above basic information will be considered sufficient. Any further information must be provided by means of the alert system. For higher level events, more detailed convention cards are required. Players should carry a suggested defense to any special systems at category A events and should check with the Tournament Director in case their bids fall into the Highly Unusual Methods (HUM) category when they need to be approved by the SABF beforehand. The onus is on the players to obtain this permission timeously.

In the event of a dispute about the meaning of a call, the lack of an adequate convention card will usually result in the Tournament Director ruling on the basis of misinformation.

Misbids of artificial overcalls which cause confusion to the opponents shall be treated as misinformation and a score adjustment may be necessary. The offending pair may also receive a procedural penalty. A second misbid will result in banning the players from using this particular convention. Ghestem and Unusual 2NT fall into this category.

ACCEPTABLE BIDS AND CONVENTIONS

Opening Bids

Any natural opening bid that conforms to the above definitions is allowed. However, if there is any additional information contained in the bid that might not be known to the opponents, the bid is alertable and all such information must be given by the partner of the bidder, but only on a legal request from an opponent at their turn to call. Failure to alert or failure to give a complete and correct explanation of the partnership agreement will be deemed to be misinformation in the event of a dispute.

The following conventional bids are acceptable at all levels of duplicate events, provided that individual clubs may restrict the use of these conventional bids at their own club, however, such restrictions may lead to these events not being eligible for master points. Likewise, individual clubs may be granted permission by the SABF to allow the use of bids for cause outside the descriptions below in accordance with Law 40 of the 2017 WBF Laws.

One Level Bids

1♣: May be one of the following:

- a) Artificial forcing opening indicating a minimum of 15HCP. A negative 1♦ response may be used;
- b) An all-purpose bid when 1♦ is an artificial forcing opening bid;
- c) Artificial forcing bid where the minimum point count and point range are specified;
- d) Prepared opening bid in 5 card major systems.

1♦: May be one of the following:

- a) An all-purpose bid when played in conjunction with an artificial 1♣ opening bid;
- b) Artificial forcing opening indicating a minimum of 15HCP. A negative 1♥ response may be used;
- c) Prepared opening in 5 card major systems.

Two Level Bids

Opening suit bids at the 2 level or higher may indicate one of the following:

- a) A weak single-suited hand with a minimum of 5 cards in the suit, the minimum point count and range must be specified;
- b) A two-suiter where at least one of the suits is designated, the minimum point count and range must be specified, the minimum shape is 5/4, but a Major in that situation should contain at least 5 cards.
- c) A three-suited hand where at least one of the suits is designated;
- d) A hand containing at least 18HCP;
- e) A hand that guarantees 8 playing tricks, if played in that suit.
- f) Opening No-trump bid at the two level or higher indicating a two-suiter with at least one suit specified.

2♣: Artificial opening bid indicating one of the following:

- a) 18 or more HCP or 8 or more playing tricks, balanced or unbalanced, forcing for at least one round. Suit need not be specified;
- b) 18 or more HCP or 8 or more playing tricks, balanced or unbalanced, game-force. Suit need not be specified.
- c) If 2♣ is the strongest bid available (other than 2nt opening) then the HCP of minimum 18 applies

2♦: Artificial opening bid indication one or more of the following:

- a) 18 or more HCP or 8 or more playing tricks, balanced or unbalanced, forcing for at least one round. Suit need not be specified;

- b) 18 or more HCP or 8 or more playing tricks, balanced or unbalanced, game-force. Suit need not be specified;
- c) A three-suiter, 18+ HCP
- d) Both majors, minimum point count and range to be specified, at least 5/4.
- e) A 5-card major, the minimum point count and range must be specified;
- f) Multi showing a weak 2 opening in a major, combined or not with strong hands. Point count and ranges must be specified.
- g) If 2d is the strongest bid available (other than 2nt opening) then the hcp of minimum 18 applies.

Three Level Bids

- 1. Pre-emptive with a 6 or 7 card single suited hand
- 2. Artificial opening with one of the following:
 - a) A transfer pre-empt;
 - b) A two-suiter where at least one of the suits is designated, range to be specified.
 - c) Opening 3NT bid indicating one of the following:
 - An unspecified solid minor without high cards outside (maximum Q)
 - An unspecified solid minor plus high cards outside
 - A long, broken minor

Four Level Bids

- 1. Pre-emptive in a single suit
- 2. Opening of four of a suit transferring to a specified known suit.

Responses and Raises

Any natural responses and raises may be used, provided that any implicit partnership agreement is alerted and a correct explanation given on request.

Any constructive and artificial responses or raises may be used and are alertable. Full disclosure must be given on request and an incomplete explanation will be deemed to be misinformation.

Development of the Auction

Any allowed method may be used, subject to alerts and full disclosure of any call which may not be entirely natural.

Competitive Auctions

Any allowed method of competitive auction may be used, subject to the following requirements which are alertable:

- a) Partnership agreement that overcalls may be made on a four card suit must be specified in the convention card.
- b) Two-suited overcalls:

- i) Over a natural call: must show at least 5-4 distribution with at least one of the suits designated; may be weak or very strong.
- ii) Over an artificial 1♣ or 1♦ opening: must be specified, if artificial, in the convention card.
- c) All doubles must be marked in the convention card. See above under 'alertable calls'.
- d) Conventional balancing calls.
- e) Any other conventional competitive call that does not conflict with the specific requirements set out above.

DISALLOWED BIDS AND BIDDING METHODS

The following bids or methods are disallowed and are subject to adjusted scores and/or penalties:

- Conventions and/or agreements whose primary purpose is to destroy opponents' methods;
- Highly Unusual Methods (HUM) and Brown Sticker systems, as defined by the World Bridge Federation, except where specifically allowed in Category A events;
- Psyching of artificial opening bids and conventional responses to artificial opening bids or any prior agreement about psyching;
- Relay systems. This does not affect the use of a relay bid sequence as enquiry bids in specific situations;
- Controlled psyches;
- Systemic psyches;
- Use of similar psyches more than once a session or more than one session of an event, will lead to the type of call being deemed a partnership agreement and subject to be disallowed under this section;
- Systemic variations;
- Opening one level bids which show values less than the Rule of 20 (or 18 in 3rd seat) by partnership agreement. This prohibition does not preclude the use of a psyche which conforms to Law 40 of the 2017 Laws of Duplicate Bridge;
- To vary partnership understanding during the auction or play following a question asked by an opponent, a response to a question, or any irregularity;
- Partnership agreements that any call may be a random call or may have a random meaning.

NB: Tournament Directors, Appeals Committees or the Reviewer are specifically empowered to prevent players from using artificial calls and sequences that those players frequently misbid or explain incorrectly, until they satisfy the Directors that they have rectified the errors and have been given permission to use the artificial sequence again. Use of an artificial sequence by a pair who have been prevented from using the sequence will be subject to an automatic disciplinary penalty and possible score adjustment. Repeated violations of such a ban will be grounds for a Disciplinary Committee hearing.

Leads, Signals and Discards

Any method of leads, signals and discards, except those specified below, may be used

provided that full disclosure has been made prior to commencement of play. Failure to supply or obtain this information may lead to the award of an adjusted score and/or disciplinary penalties. Roman Signals (when odd=like, even=dislike) on the lead of an honour are specifically disallowed. Roman discards to remain allowed.

Leads, signals and discarding methods must not be alerted during play,

CATEGORIES OF EVENTS - Category A Events

Quarter-final, semi-final and finals of team events and the championship section of pairs at regional and national level or events specifically designated as a category A event by the Executive of the SABF. Any other event is a category B event.

The Sponsoring Organisation (S.O) will determine how much prior notice must be supplied to prospective opponents before use of such methods may be employed in Category A events and any specific conditions for the use of such methods. The S.O. will also determine whether such methods constitute Highly Unusual Methods, in which case the restrictions of the following paragraph apply. The onus is on players to submit their unusual system cards together with a suggested defence for approval prior to these rounds.

Highly Unusual Methods (HUM) may not be used, except with the consent of the S.O. and then only in accordance with the regulations laid down by the World Bridge Federation for the use of such methods.

The use of systems variations and relay systems is permitted, subject to prior notice requirements, as stated above and full disclosure when required.

Encrypted Signals and Random Carding are specifically disallowed.

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