The St.George Bridge Guide

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1 Introduction

The basic aim of bridge is to establish a *contract* at the highest level that you and your partner expect to *make*. A contract promises to win a certain number plus six *tricks* out of a possible thirteen, with a particular suit (or no suit) as *trump*.

There are certain contracts which are especially desirable to make because of the way bridge is scored. A contract of 5 clubs, 5 diamonds, 4 hearts, 4 spades or 3 no trump constitutes a *game*. Making a game earns far more points than making any lesser contract. Beyond making a game, significant bonus points are awarded for bidding and making a *small slam* or a *large slam* (any contract at the six or seven level, respectively).

2 Bidding

A primary goal of bidding is to find an *eight card fit* between you and your partner, i.e., you wish to find a suit in which you and your partner hold at least eight out of the thirteen cards. Once you find a trump suit you will want to determine how many tricks you can expect to take. In order that you may end up in the right contract, the bids are designed to reveal all the important features of your hand to your partner.

2.1 The Suits

Clubs and diamonds are the *minor suits* and hearts and spades are the *major suits*. Because it is much easier to make a game in a major suit, one always tries to find a major suit fit. Also, each bid must be *higher* than the preceding bid. The allowable bids in order are 1♣, 1♢, 1♡, 1♠, 1NT, 2♣, 2♢, 2♡, 2♠, 2NT, 3♣, ..., 7NT.

2.2 High-Card Points

Evaluating the strength of a hand is based on the following point system. Aces are worth 4, kings 3, queens 2, and jacks 1.

2.3 Distribution Points

When playing in a trump contract it is desirable to have short suits. For this reason count 3 points for a *void*, 2 points for *singletons*, and 1 point for a *doubleton*, which are suits in which you have respectively zero, one or two cards. After finding a fit these values increase to 5-3-1 if you have 3 or 4 trump cards.

3 Noncompetitive Auctions

Usually one partnership does most or all of the bidding. In this case the following bidding system should usually get you to the right contract. In this section we will assume that all the bidding is being done by one partnership.

The bidding is designed establish a 8 card fit, and to determine if you have the strength to try for a game or a slam. For a major suit or no trump game your partnership needs at least 25-26 points, for a minor suit game 28-29 and for a slam 33.

There are two types of bid: *open-ended* and *limiting* bids, depending on whether or not they limit the strength of your hand. You should try to keep the auction going until your partner has limited his hand.

In this section examples will be given like this

1♣,2NT,2♣,pass 1♡,1HT,2♠,3♠

The above line gives two separate examples. Each describes the consecutive bids of one partnerships and assumes the other partnership always passes.

The following is a summary of the basic rules of noncompetitive auctions which will be explained below.

3.1 The Basics

- Limit your hand as soon as it is appropriate.
- Keep bidding until your partner has limited his hand.
- An opening bid promises 12 high card points.
- A response at the 1-level promises 6 high card points.
- A 2-level new suit response promises 10 high card points.
- An opening bid of a major suit promises 5 cards.
- An opening bid of a minor suit promises 3 cards.
- A natural bid of a new suit promises 4 cards.
- Rebidding partner's suit promises an 8-card fit.

3.2 The Usual 1-level Opening Bids

- In order to start the bidding you should have 12 high card points (HCP). With fewer points you generally pass. In each of the following special cases you will need to make a different opening bid, which will be discussed later.
  - You have 20 or more points. (see *The 2NT opener* and *The 2♣ opener*).
  - You have a balanced hand with 15-17 HCP (see *The 1NT opener*)
  - You have a weak hand with an unusually long suit (see *Pre-emptive bids*).
- If you have (at least) 5 cards in a major suit bid this suit at the 1-level. If you have 5 in each, bid spades first with 12-16 HCP and hearts first with 17+ HCP (see *the reverse*).
- Failing this, bid the longest of your minor suits at the 1-level. If you have three of each bid 1♣, and if you have four of each bid 1♢. If you have at least 5 in each, bid diamonds first with 12-16 HCP and clubs first with 17+ HCP (see *the reverse*).

3.3 Responses to the usual 1-level openers

If your partner makes an opening bid, you need at least 6 HCP to respond; otherwise pass.

- If you have 6-9 HCP bid in this order of preference.
  - If you have four cards in a suit and are allowed to bid it at the one level do so; note that this an open-ended bid indicating 6+ points. If you have more than one suit to bid, bid the lowest suit possible.
  - If you have four cards in your partner's major suit or six cards in your partner's minor suit then bid it at the three level.
  - If you have three cards in your partner's major suit or five cards in your partner's minor suit then bid it at the two level.
  - Otherwise bid 1NT.
- If you have 10+ HCP and have a suit to bid at the one level then do so (as above). If you cannot bid a suit at the 1-level, then bid at the 2-level in this order of preference.
  - Bid an unbid 5 card major suit.
  - With four cards in your partner's major suit, if your opponents have bid then *cue bid* your opponent's suit (see *Competetive auctions*), otherwise bid game or bid a new suit at the 2-level.
  - Bid an unbid 4 card major suit.
  - With 3 card support for your partner's major or 13+ points bid your lowest unbid 4 card minor suit.
  - Otherwise bid 2NT (you have 10-12 HCP).
- If you have 17 or more points and a *solid suit* (six cards and three *honours* – jack, queen, king, ace) then make a *jump bid* (i.e., bid one level higher than necessary) in a new suit.

3.4 Rebids by Opener

3.4.1 After a limiting response

If your partner has given you a limiting response showing 6-9 points by bidding 1NT or by rebidding your suit at the 2-level, then you are unlikely to have enough combined points for a game unless you have a strong hand.

If you have less than 17 points then you have the following options.

- You can pass or rebid your suit at the 2-level if you do not wish to play in no trump. If you rebid, your partner will pass. Examples of such auctions are as follows:
  1♡,2♡,pass 1♣,1NT,pass 1♣,1NT,2♣,pass

- With less than 17 points you can bid a new suit if it is *lower* than your opening suit (in which you must have at least five cards). Partner will usually pass or rebid the opening suit.
  1♠,1NT,2♣,pass 1♢,1NT,2♣,2♢,pass

  If you are lucky, your partner will suddenly like his hand much better (knowing about your second suit). For example, he may have a singleton or void in this suit, or they may have a fit. Partner will make a stronger bid.
  1♠,2♠,3♡,4♠,pass 1♠,1NT,2♡,3♣ (forcing)

If you have 17 or more points then you still might be able to make a game.

- If you have a balanced hand and 18 or 19 points then bid 2NT or 3NT.
  1♣,2♣,2NT 1♢,1NT,3NT

- If you and your partner have already found a major suit fit than you can jump to game, or can *invite* your partner to game, by rebidding your suit at the 3-level. Your partner will bid game with 8-9 points (at the 4-level), or will pass with 6-7 points.
  1♠,2♠,3♠,pass 1♡,2♡,3♡,4♡,pass

- If you have not yet found a major suit fit, then you might be able to make another attempt.
  - If you have a good six card major suit, then rebid it at the three level. Your partner will either pass, raise to game, or unusually

bid 3NT.
1♠,1NT,3♠,pass 1♡,1NT,3♡,4♡

- If this is not the case, and you do not have a second suit to bid, then either pass or rebid your suit if you do not wish to play in no trump.
  1♡,1NT,pass 1♣,1NT,2♣,pass
- With 5-5 in the majors, bid 2♠ (see *the reverse*), or with 5-5 in the minors, bid 2♢. With 6-7 points and a fit, partner will rebid this suit. With 8-9 point partner will bid game in the major suit, or invite to game in the minor suit.
  1♡,1NT,2♠,3♠ 1♡,1NT,2♠,4♠, 1♣,1NT,2♢,4♢
  With 8-9 HCP, partner can bid 3NT with stoppers in the unbid suits or bid a stopper.
  1♣,1NT,2♢,3NT 1♣,1NT,2♢,2♠ 1♡,1NT,2♠,3♣
  Otherwise you do not have game and you need to find a 'safe' contract. Partner will either pass, rebid opener's first suit, or bid 2NT.
- If you opened a minor, and have four of a major you can bid this suit at the two level. This is another example of the *the reverse*, since the second bid suit is of higher rank than the first suit. Partner will rebid your first suit (discouraging), bid a stopped suit, or bid no trump.
  1♣,2♣,2♠,3♣,pass 1♣,1NT,2♡,2♠ 1♣,2♣,2♠,2NT
- With a second suit to bid and the reverse unavailable, bid the new suit at the three level. (This suit should be lower than your original suit). Partner will either rebid your first suit (discouraging), raise the new suit, bid a stopper, or bid 3NT.
  1♠,2♠,3♢,3♠,pass 1♡,1NT,3♢,5♢ 1♠,1NT,3♣,3♢

3.4.2 After a new suit response

Since partner's hand is not limited, you must keep bidding.

- If you have an unbid 4- or 5-card major or a 5-card minor suit, then you should bid them (with preference to the major suit). Only bid a 4-card major suit if your partner might have a fit. This bid does not say anything about your point-count. If you have an unbid 4-card minor then bid it if it is a lower suit than your initial bid or if you have 16+ points. If none of these apply then you can show your partner the strength of your hand.

- If you have 12-15 points then make a *limiting bid*. If you have an 8-card fit then rebid your partner's suit, otherwise rebid your own suit or bid NT at the lowest available level. Note the following:
  - Rebidding your major suit when 1NT is available promises 6 cards.
  - Rebidding a minor suit opener promises 5 cards.
  - A 2NT bid promises *stoppers* in the unbid suits, i.e., the ace, the king with one other card, the queen with two others, or the jack with 3 others. Any five-card suit is also considered a stopper.
- If you have 16-19 points then after a 1-level response by your partner bid do the following in this order of preference. Rebid partner's major suit at the 3-level (promising a fit). Rebid your opening suit at the 3-level (indicating 6 cards and a *solid suit*, ie. three honours). Bid 2NT with a five-card major suit, or with a balanced hand and 18 or 19 points.

  If you have 16-19 points a 2-level response by your partner gives you enough points for game. If you have a fit for your partner's major suit then rebid it at the 4-level. Otherwise bid 3NT. If you are unwilling to risk 3NT with an unstopped suit, then bid the unbid suit that you have stopped. If partner has the fourth suit stopped then he will bid no trump. Otherwise he will rebid a suit.

3.4.3 After 2NT

If you have 12-13 points then pass, with 14+ bid 3NT. The important numbers here are 25-26 combined points for 3NT.

3.5 Bidding two-suited hands

With at least five cards in two suits, the following bids will allow opener to show the lengths of her suits to her partner. Opener will only be able to fully describe her hand if her partner has enough points to allow the auction to continue to the necessary level.

- With 17+ HCP bid the *reverse*. This shows 5-5 shape. To indicate an extra card, rebid the corresponding suit.
- With 12-16 HCP bid the two suits in the usual order (the higher one first), and then rebid the second bid suit, to show at least 5-5 shape. To indicate an extra card, rebid the corresponding suit.

It is more difficult for repsonder to a two-suited hand. Rebid suits to show an extra card.

3.6 The 1NT opener

With a balanced hand and a HCP count of 15 to 17 you may open 1NT. A balanced hand is one without a 5-card major, without any suit of length 6 or more, without any singletons or voids, and with no more than one doubleton. The one exception is the unique 4-4-4-1 shape which is also considered balanced.

Responder may bid

- 2NT with 8-9 HCP and a balanced hand,
- 3NT with 10-15 HCP and a balanced hand,
- *Stayman* with 8+ HCP, an unbalanced hand, and a major suit with exactly four cards (you may have more than four cards in the other major),
- *Jacoby Transfer* with a five-card major suit and any strength, or
- *Minor Suit Transfer* with 8+ HCP, 5-4 or better shape in the minors and no four-card major.

3.6.1 Stayman

Responder looks for a 4-4 major suit fit by bidding 2♣. Opener has only three available responses:

- 2♢, denying a four-card major;
- 2♡, showing a four-card heart suit and possibly four spades;

- 2♠, showing a four-card spade suit and denying four hearts.

Responder may take the following action:

- Raise hearts or spades to show the presence of a fit and invite to game with 8 or 9 points.
- Bid 2NT with 8 or 9 points and no fit to invite game in no trump.
- Jump to game with 10 or more points and a known eight-card fit.
- Bid 2 of a major with a 5-card suit and 8 or 9 points; this indicates four cards in the other major, otherwise Jacoby would have been used to begin with.
- Bid 3 of an unbid major with 10 or more points and a 5-card suit.
- Bid 3NT to sign off. Note that 3NT over 2♡ indicates an unbid four-card spade suit, and partner may correct to 4♠ with both hearts and spades.

3.6.2 Jacoby Transfer

Responder may bid 2♢ or 2♡ to direct opener to bid the next higher suit. That is, 2♢ shows five hearts and 2♡ shows five spades. Opener must bid responder's suit: usually at the two-level, but at the three-level with four-card support, a doubleton, and a maximum holding. The three-level bid is called the *superaccept*.

Responder's second bid is crucial, since the initial bid says nothing about strength.

- Over the usual bid, responder may do any of the following:
  - pass, with a weak hand, 0-7 points
  - 2♠ with five-five shape in the majors and 7-9 points, inviting game
  - 3♡ over 2♠ with five-five shape in the majors and 9+ points, establishing a game force and a potential slam try
  - 2NT to invite to game with 8-9 points and a semi-balanced hand
  - raise to three to invite to game

  - 3NT to offer a choice of games
  - raise to four as sign-off

- Over the superaccept, responder may raise to game, pass if game is clearly out of reach, or attempt a slam by *cue-bidding* a first-round control or using *Blackwood*.

3.6.3 Minor-suit Transfers

Responder may bid 2♠ to request opener to choose a minor suit.

Opener will bid a four-card minor suit at the three level, bid 2NT to deny interest in a minor-suit game, bid 3NT to sign off with stoppers in both majors, bid a major at the three level to show a stopper, or bid four of a minor to show four cards and a maximum hand with slam interest.

3.7 The 2NT opener

You may open 2NT with 20-22 HCP and a balanced hand. Stayman and Jacoby may be used over 2NT with the bids raised one level; responder's values will be shaded by the knowledge of partner's strong hand.

3.8 Higher NT openers

With an extremely strong balanced hand, you may open at higher levels still. An opening bid of 3NT indicates 26-27 HCP, and 4NT indicates 28+ HCP.

3.9 The 2♣ opener

The artificial 2♣ opener always shows a very strong hand. It can have one of three specific meanings:

- A one-suited hand with 17+ HCP and one trick short of game.
- A somewhat unbalanced hand with 20+ HCP.
- A balanced hand with 23-25 HCP.

The 2♣ opener is usually forcing for two rounds.

- With 0-8 HCP responder's initial bid is 2♢.

- With 9+ HCP responder should bid a 5-card suit or 2NT to indicate the lack thereof; also, a six-card minor suit can be bid at the three level. At this point, your partnership will be looking to bid a *slam*.

Opener's second bid is natural, showing a real suit or – with a NT bid – a balanced hand. Bid 3♢ only with a one-suited hand.

If opener has bid 2NT over 2♢, responder will use the usual responses after a NT opener. Pass with a total bust (0-1 HCP), or use Stayman with a four-card major, transfer to a five-card major, or bid 3NT.

After any other bid over 2♢, responder will further refine his point range.

- With 0-4 HCP bid the cheaper of the minor suits at the three level. To show a bust over 3♢, bid 3NT.

- With 5-8 HCP make a natural bid.

3.10 Slam bidding

3.10.1 Cue bids

Cue bids are a tool for slam bidding, used to show first-round control in the bid suit: either a void or the ace. They are also used to show interest in slam once a trump suit has been established; partner can reject the slam try by rebidding the known trump suit.

The ordinary cue-bid is made immediately following a trump suit agreement. There are three cases when a new suit bid is a cue bid:

- A non-jump bid of an unbid suit beyond 3 of an agreed major;

- Bid of the fourth suit at the three-level when a minor suit is agreed;

- Any non-agreed suit bid above 3NT.

Subsequent to the initial cue-bid, responder has the following options:

- Discourage slam with return to agreed suit or 3NT;

- Make another low-level bid showing control of the bid suit;

- Place the slam or use Blackwood.

In the happy event that responder has multiple cue-bids available, unbid suits should be bid before bid suits, and aces before voids. However, the bidding sequence should be planned to show the content of the hand in the least possible space.

Bid of a suit for which the partnership has shown first-round control indicates second-round control, i.e., king or singleton.

In addition to the ordinary cue-bid, made when a trump suit is explicitly agreed, there is the possibility of an advance cue-bid: this is a new suit bid beyond 3NT, or a fourth-suit bid of 3♠, which agrees partner's suit by implication, shows control in the bid suit, and establishes a slam try.

3.10.2 Roman Key-Card Blackwood

Either partner may initiate the convention by bidding 4NT asking for key cards. There are five key cards: four aces and the king of trump. The trump suit is a suit both partners have bid or else the last non-artificial bid suit.

The responses to 4NT are the following:

- 5♣ to show 0 or 3 key cards
- 5♢ to show 1 or 4 key cards
- 5♡ to show 2 or 5 key cards without the queen of trump
- 5♠ to show 2 or 5 key cards plus the queen of trump.

Typically the key card count will provide enough information to place the final contract. Sometimes, however, initiator is trying to decide between a small or grand slam; in this case, a bid of 5NT can be used to ask for kings. There are three remaining kings – the kings in the non-trump suits – and a response of 6♣ shows 0 kings, 6♢ shows one, 6♡ shows two, 6♠ shows three.

The Relay: Using 4NT, initiator may discover that slam is impossible and want to sign off in 5NT. However, 5NT is the king-asking bid described above. Consequently, a bid of 5 of a major of which no natural bid has been made by the partnership requests partner to bid 5NT to place the final contract.

3.10.3 Gerber

A bid of 4♣ over a natural bid by partner of 1NT or 2NT is the Gerber ace-asking bid. Gerber may also be used following Stayman, as in the following: 1NT,2♣,2♠,4♣

The responses to Gerber are

- 4♢ with 0 or 4 aces
- 4♡ with 1 ace
- 4♠ with 2 aces
- 4NT with 3 aces

Gerber initiator can either sign off in game, place a slam, or bid 5♣ as a king-asking bid with grand slam interest. The responses to the king-asking bid are

- 5♢ with no kings
- 5♡ with 1 king
- 5♠ with 2 kings
- 5NT with 3 kings
- 6♣ with 4 kings

Because Gerber is the ace-asking bid following a natural 1NT or 2NT bid, a bid of 4NT in this situation is not Blackwood. Rather, such a bid is a quantitative invitation to 6NT: partner should bid 6NT with a maximum, pass otherwise.

3.10.4 Quantitative Raises

A bid of 4NT after partner's NT bid shows interest in playing 6NT. If partner has not limited his hand and has more than what he's promised he will bid 6NT. If partner has limited his hand, than he will bid 6NT with a maximal hand.

Unusually, you may also bid of 5 of a major, inviting to slam.

3.11 Special Rules

The Reverse: If you have two suits to bid, (i.e., 5-5 shape) and 17+ points, then bid them in the opposite order to show your strength, i.e., hearts then spades. In addition, if your partner responds to your first bid with a 2-level bid, then you must make your second bid at the 3-level.

Fourth Suit Forcing: If you realize that you and your partner have enough points for a game, but you don't yet know what the best suit will be then you should establish a *game force*. Do this by bidding the last unbid suit (the fourth suit). Note that this is an *artificial bid* and does not promise any cards in this suit. Fourth suit forcing is to be used only if opponents have not bid; a cue bid of the enemy suit has a different meaning, which may be Michaels or may be a control-showing bid. An exception to this convention is the unique bidding sequence 1♣,1♢,1♡,1♠ which is not fourth suit forcing. Also, fourth suit forcing is not to be used past 3NT; fourth suit bid of 3♠ or higher is control-showing instead.

4 Competitive Auctions

4.1 Overcalls

If an opponent opens, the point count needed to start the bidding for your side is slightly relaxed. In this situation, your shape is more important than the strength of your hand; outside strength will be valuable in a defensive situation, whereas a long suit will be of value only on offense.

A overcall of an opponent's bid indicates a real suit, of length at least five cards, and 10+ HCP.

4.2 Pre-emptive bids

With a weak hand and length in one suit, you may make a pre-emptive bid to use up the opponents' bidding space. The objective here is to prevent the opposition from reaching their desired contract. You should only pre-empt if you expect to lose at most two tricks in this suit (under normal distributions of the remaining cards).

With 5 to 11 HCP and 6+ cards in one suit, open with 2 of your long suit. Recall that 2♣ is a strong opening and is not available as a pre-emptive bid. In first or second seat, you are also pre-empting your partner, so the pre-emptive bid has the following restrictions: your hand should not contain an ace outside the bid suit, and should not have an outside major suit of four cards or longer.

With additional length you may wish to pre-empt at a higher level, though only with a weak hand (5-7 HCP) if you are in the first seat or in second seat after a pass.

With a borderline opening hand of 10-11 HCP and a long suit you may prefer to open instead of pre-empt, particularly if your partner has not yet bid.

4.2.1 Constructive bidding over partner's pre-empt

The following discussion presumes an opening pre-empt at the two-level.

- Responder may already have enough information to place the final contract, and may do so directly.
  - Responder may jump in a new suit to invite game; this indicates a strong one-suited hand.
  - Responder may bid 3NT or jump to game in a suit to sign off. Opener must pass.
- With a strong hand – 14+ HCP, shaded by distribution – bid 2NT. This is a forcing bid, and partner will further describe his hand with one of the three following rebids.
  - With a minimum, opener will rebid three of the original suit. This is discouraging, and partner will likely pass.
  - With a solid suit, one headed by AKQ or at least AKJ, opener should bid 3NT.
  - With an 8-11 HCP and no solid suit, opener should bid a new suit at the three-level to show a "feature", ace, king, or queen, in the bid suit.

  Responder will rebid three of opener's suit to invite to game, bid a new suit to show a strong holding in the bid suit and establish a game force, bid 3NT to request sign off and give partner the option to correct, or bid game in a suit to definitely sign off.

- With a slightly weaker hand, game may still be a possibility; and even if it is not, the final contract may be improved, or interference to the opposition can be increased.
  - Responder can raise partner's suit to extend the pre-empt. This is typically done with support for partner's suit and a weak hand, 8-13 points; responder may not expect to make the contract, but hopes to prevent the opponents from finding their contract.
  - Responder can bid a new suit at the lowest available level to indicate a misfit with partner's suit and a strong suit of his own; opener will usually pass, but may raise with a near-maximum and support.

4.3 Takeout Double

When your opponent opens, you may double to show that you lack a five-card suit, requesting that your partner bid.

Doubler's partner must bid, even with a bust, if the intervening opponent passes. With 10+ HCP bid one level higher than necessary.

If there is an intervening bid, the option of passing is available; pass with a balanced hand and 7 or less HCP, bid with a long suit and 6+ HCP or with a somewhat balanced hand and 8+ HCP. A suit bid indicates at least four cards.

If doubler's partner has not jump bid, then the doubler should only bid again with 18/19+ HCP.

Doubles are considered to be for takeout through 3♢. At 3♡ or above, doubles may be either punitive or takeout – use your judgement. A takeout double may be converted to penalty at your discretion; in such a case, you should have a very strong holding in the enemy trump suit.

4.4 Negative Double

If your partner's bid is overcalled, you may double the overcall to show four cards in an unbid major suit. If both majors have been bid, this shows four cards in both minors; if the opponent overcalls 1♣ with 1♢ this shows four cards in both majors.

The strength needed to double a one-level or two-level minor overcall is the same as the strength needed to make an initial one-level bid. At higher levels, doubler should have 9+ points.

4.5 Unusual 2NT

Overcall of 2NT over opponent's opening bid of one of a suit shows a five-five shape in the two lower unbid suits. Thus, 2NT over one of a major shows both minors; 2NT over 1♢ shows five hearts and five clubs; 2NT over 1♣ shows five hearts and five diamonds.

The unusual 2NT bid should be made with either a weak hand, 8-12 HCP, or a strong hand, 17+ HCP. Holders of intermediate two-suited hands should bid their suits directly.

Responder will show preference for one of partner's known suits, or will bid the enemy suit to show a strong hand with game interest.

Initiator will usually pass unless forced to bid by partner, holding a weak hand. With a strong hand, either make a cue-bid of enemy suit or a bid of the fourth suit to show the strength of your hand.

4.6 Michaels

Cue-bid of opponent's opening suit indicates a two-suited hand, with five-five shape or possibly five-four shape with a strong four-card suit. Use of this cue-bid indicates either a weak hand, with 8-12 HCP, or a strong hand, 17+ HCP. Intermediate hands should be handled either by using the takeout double or – more commonly – by bidding the suits directly.

A bid of 2♣ over 1♣ or of 2♢ over 1♢ shows both majors; 2♡ over 1♡ shows spades and a minor; 2♠ over 1♠ shows hearts and a minor.

Following Michaels, responder is obliged to choose the trump suit. Bid of one of partner's known suits is discouraging but shows a fit. Bid of 2NT after a major-suit cue-bid requests partner to specify his minor suit holding.

4.7 Cue bid after overcall

If you have four cards in your partner's major suit and 10+ HCP and your right-hand opponent overcalls then bid your opponent's suit. This shows the strength of your hand and reduces your opponents' bidding space.

4.8 Lead request double

If the opponents make an artificial bid in a suit in which they would not want to play you can convey some information to your partner. If you want your partner to lead this suit if possible, then double.

This bid is most useful when your opponents are bidding slam and one or two quick tricks can defeat the contract. The artificial bids in *Blackwood* allow the perfect opportunity for this type of double.

If you fail to double when it was possible your partner should lead another suit.

5 Defending

5.1 Rules of thumb

If you are in the *second seat*, i.e., the second person to play in a given trick, then the rule of thumb is to play a low card. If you are in the *third seat* then the rule of thumb is to play a high card.

Another rule of thumb: don't underlead an ace on the first trick in a suit contract.

If your partner plays the *opening lead* take note of its suit. This is your partner's suit. If you think your partner has length in this suit together with your own honours or shortness in this suit then lead your partner's suit when you get the opportunity.

5.2 Signalling

In the playing of a hand, the declarer has the advantage of knowing the contents of her partner's hand. While defending, your partner cannot know your hand exactly, but our conventions on *signalling* will try to ensure that your partner will give you the desired lead.

5.2.1 In a suit contract

When following suit and playing a lower card than has already been played, then: play a high card to encourage your partner to lead this suit, or play a low card to discourage your partner from leading this suit.

If you have two cards remaining in a suit, then play the high card first. When your partner sees you subsequently playing the low card he will know that you are out of cards in this suit.

The first time you are unable to follow suit, play a card from the suit you want your partner to lead.

5.2.2 In a no trump contract

In a no trump contract you usually do not want to discard any cards from your long suit. Instead, discard from a suit you do not want your partner to lead. There are two remaining suits (other than the suit lead and the suit discarded). If you want the higher suit lead, then discard a high card, and if you want the lower suit lead discard a low card.

A Multi-2♢

A preemptive bid of 2♢ does not take much space from the opponents, and players often preempt 3♢ anyway. We put the 2♢ opener to more general use.

A bid of 2♢ may mean a preemptive bid in one of the majors or it may mean a 2NT opener. Opener will define his bid in the following round.

Responder must bid at least 2♡, and this is the usual reply. Any other bid requires at least opening points and is an attempt at a constructive auction.

On hearing 2♡ from partner, opener will either pass – if a 2♡ opening was desired – or correct to 2♠ or 2NT. Responder should treat this rebid as if it were the opening bid and the auction can proceed as described earlier in the guide. An attempt at a constructive auction should be met first with a clarification of the initial bid.

A.1 Other 2-level openers

The 2♢ opener frees up the higher 2-level openers for other purposes. The use we have for them is to indicate preemptive two-suited hands. These are preemptive bids, and as such should be used with the 5-11 point range.

The meanings of the three bids are as follows:

- 2♡: At least 5-5 shape in the majors.

- 2♠: At least 5 spades and at least 5 cards in a minor suit.

- 2NT: At least 5-5 shape in the minors.

Partner will usually choose an eight-card fit and may attempt a constructive bid with a strong hand.

A.2 Multi-2♢ in fourth seat

With the exception of 2♣ and 2NT, all our two-level openers are preemptive. We adjust this a bit with the multi-2♢ option, where a bidding sequence is needed to clarify an actual 2NT opener; nonetheless, the major use of these bids is preemptive.

In fourth seat, following three passes, there is no reason to make a preemptive bid. All bids in this situation are constructive. Consequently, *with the option of passing out the hand,* two-level openers above 2♣ have the following meaning:

- 2♢: at least 5-5 in the minors, with 12+ HCP.

- 2♡: at least 5-5 in the majors, with 12+ HCP.

- 2♠: at least 5 spades and 5 of a minor suit, with 12+ HCP.

- 2NT: 20-22 HCP and balanced distribution. This is the usual 2NT opener.

In the case of a suit bid, partner should continue with constructive bids; in the case of 2NT, Stayman or Jacoby can be used, or the contract can be set directly.