

ACBL Open + Convention Chart

Introduction

There are 4 new ACBL Convention Charts. The Open+ Chart will be used for the 2018 USBC. In this chart, methods are generally allowed unless they are expressly prohibited within the Chart.

A comprehensive Definitions section is included In addition to the Chart. Some definitions are not relevant for the Open+ chart, but the entire section has been included in this excerpt. Any word that is capitalized on a Chart is included in the Definitions section.

An Examples section follows the Chart for cases where a rule might be ambiguous. Examples that apply to charts other than the Open+ chart have been removed in this excerpt. Both the Definitions and the Examples should be included with the Charts. Any Definition or Chart Rule marked with three asterisks (***) has 1 or more examples in the Example section.

Pre-alerts and Written Defenses

Two classes of methods are particularly difficult to defend against, and these methods are allowed only in events governed by the Open+ Chart, and then only in segments of six boards or longer. These methods, based on #3 or #7 of the Opening Bids section of the Open+ Chart, require both a pre-alert and a written defense.

Official ACBL defenses must be provided when possible. In the event that a convention does not yet have an official ACBL defense, the pair must, *before* using it in the 2018 USBC:

- Submit a full description of the convention and a proposed defense to Jan Martel, who will convert it to a USBF Advance Submission Form, link it to your SSF, and send it to the USBF Conventions Committee for review. The method and defense will be approved if they have been submitted at least 4 weeks before the start of the USBC (by Friday, April 13th) and have not been rejected by the Conventions Committee; and
- Provide the submitted defense to any opponents.

Note: For any method for which a written defense is required, the opposing pair may use their own defense rather than the one provided. The defending pair may refer to a pre-written copy of their own defense

Definitions

A group of four numbers separated by equal signs (=) denotes an exact suit distribution. For example: 5=4=3=1 denotes five spades, four hearts, three diamonds, and one club. A group of four numbers separated by hyphens (-) denotes any of the exact distributions matching that general pattern. For example: 4-3-3-3 represents: 4=3=3=3 or 3=4=3=3 or 3=3=4=3 or 3=3=3=4.

Definitions #1-4 below have specific meanings that may vary from commonly understood meanings or may not have previously been defined. Definitions #5 and higher likely match common understandings of the term, but are still defined here for specificity and clarity. Definitions #5 and higher appear alphabetically.

1. **Hand strength:**

- a. **“Weak”**: A hand that contains less than Near Average Strength.
- b. **“Near Average Strength”**: A hand that has at least 8 HCP or meets the “Rule of 17”.
- c. **“Average Strength”**: A hand that has at least 10 HCP or meets the “Rule of 19”.
- d. **“Strong”**: A hand that contains:
 - i. at least 15 HCP; or
 - ii. at least 14 HCP and meets the “Rule of 24”.
 - iii. at least 5 Control Points and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands.
- e. **“Very Strong”**: A hand that contains:
 - i. at least 20 HCP; or
 - ii. at least 14 HCP and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands.
 - iii. at least 5 Control Points and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands.

2. *** **“Natural”**:

- a. Any opening bid, response, or overcall in a suit at the one-level showing 4 or more cards in the suit bid, except as provided in 2(f) and 2(g).
- b. Any opening bid at the two-level or higher showing 5 or more cards in the suit bid.
- c. Any response or rebid in a minor at the two-level or higher showing 3 or more cards in the suit bid
- d. Any response or rebid in a major at the two-level or higher showing 4 or more cards in the suit bid.
- e. Any suit overcall at any level showing 4 or more cards in the suit bid.
- f. A 1C opening bid showing 3 or more clubs. This opening may also include exactly 4=4=3=2 shape.
- g. A 1D opening bid, overcall, or response showing 3 or more diamonds.
- h. A NT opening bid or overcall that contains no voids, no more than one singleton, which must be an ace, king, or queen, and that does not contain 10 or more cards in two suits combined.

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- i. A call is still Natural if it also shows distribution in another suit.
 - j. A pass, double, or redouble is Natural if it suggests the current contract as the final contract.
 - k. After the opening bid any bid is Natural if it suggests the contract bid as the final contract.
3. *** **“Quasi-Natural”**:
- a. A minor suit bid that is either Natural or shows a pattern that meets the definition of a Natural NT opening.
 - b. Any opening bid at the two-level or higher showing 4 or more cards in the suit bid.
4. *** **“Purely Destructive Initial Action”**: An opening bid or an overcall that satisfies none of the following:
- a. 4+ cards in a known suit.
 - b. 5+ cards in one of two possible suits.
 - c. 5+-4+ distribution in any two suits.
 - d. An either/or combination of any two of a, b, or c (which may be the same option twice).
 - e. A Three-suited hand.
 - f. At least Average strength.
 - g. Any Natural or Quasi-Natural opening bid.
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5. **“Advancer”**: Overcaller’s partner.
6. **“Agreement”**: Partnership understandings of methods adopted by the partnership that are reached explicitly by discussion or implicitly through the mutual experience or awareness of the players. This applies to all calls, allowed and disallowed.
7. **“Artificial”**: Any call that is not Natural or Quasi-Natural.
8. **“Balancing Seat”**: After the bidding has been opened, a player who would end the auction if that player passed.
9. **“Bid”**: A call that names a level and a denomination (suit or notrump).
10. **“Call”**: Any bid, pass, double, or redouble.
11. **“Control Bid”**: A bid showing first or second round control of a suit.
12. **“Control Points”**: An alternate evaluation method where an Ace=2 and a King=1
13. **“Cuebid”**: A bid of a suit that an opponent has bid Naturally or Quasi-Naturally or a suit in which an opponent has shown 4 or more cards.
14. **“Direct Overcall”**: An immediate overcall by the left hand opponent of Opener.
15. *** **“Encrypted Signal”**: An encrypted signal is one where the ordering of the cards for the signal is dependent on information known only to the defenders. It is not an encrypted signal to

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have the type of signal (attitude, count, suit preference) dependent on information known only to the defenders.

16. **“Forcing”**: A call that, by partnership Agreement, may not be passed if the intervening opponent passes.
17. **“High Card Points (HCP)”**: The total number of points in a hand based on honors, counting 4 for an Ace, 3 for a King, 2 for a Queen, and 1 for a Jack.
18. **“Invitational”**: A hand sufficiently strong to indicate that partner should bid game unless partner has a minimum.
19. **“Length”**: Unless otherwise specified, “showing Length in a suit” or “showing a suit” means at least four cards in the suit.
20. **“Opener”**: The first player to make a bid in the auction.
21. **“Overcall”**: The first bid made by the pair that does not consist of Opener and Responder.
22. **“Preempt”**: A jump bid (by either pair) that does not promise at least Average strength.
23. *** **“Psych”**: A call that intentionally and grossly misstates the strength and/or suit length of one’s hand.
24. **“Psychic Control”**: Any Bid that conveys that a prior Bid was a Psych.
25. *** **“Range”**: One more than the difference between the highest number of HCP a bid can be and the lowest.
26. **“Responder”**: Opener’s partner.
27. *** **“Rule of N”**: A method of determining hand strength computed by adding the High Card Points of the hand to the number of cards in the two longest suits. To meet the “Rule of N”, this total must be at least N. *
28. **“Takeout”**: A call that shows support for two or three suits and/or a strong hand.
29. **“Three-Suited”**: A hand with 4-4-4-1, 5-4-3-1, or 5-4-4-0 shape.

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Bidding Agreements are allowed unless they are specifically disallowed. If an Agreement would be disallowed unless it satisfies a specific High Card Point or shape requirement, a player may not use judgment to include hands with fewer High Card Points or a different shape. Note that almost all Agreements are allowed beginning with Responder's initial action.

Disallowed Bidding Agreements

Passes Before an Opening

1. *** An opening pass that is Forcing.
2. *** An opening pass in first or second seat that could be a stronger hand than an opening 1-level bid with the same shape; i.e., if two hands are exactly the same except that an honor is replaced with a low card in the same suit, you cannot open the hand with the low card and pass the hand with an honor.

Opening Bids

Disallowed Opening Bids

1. *** A Natural or Quasi-Natural 1-level opening bid in first or second seat that could contain less than Near-Average Strength.
2. An Artificial 1-level opening bid in any seat that could contain less than Average Strength.
3. *** In segments of fewer than 6 boards, an Artificial 1-level opening bid showing Length only in a known suit other than the one opened, unless that bid is also Strong and Forcing.
4. *** A Natural 1NT opening bid that could contain fewer than 10 HCP.
5. *** A Natural 1NT opening bid that has a Range greater than 5 HCP.
6. *** In segments of fewer than 6 boards, a non-Forcing 1NT opening that does not meet the definition of Natural. In segments of 6 boards or more, a non-Forcing 1NT with a void or 10 cards in 2 suits.
7. In segments of fewer than 6 boards, an Artificial opening Preempt below 3NT that does not show at least one known suit.
8. *** An Artificial opening Preempt below 3NT that may have Length only in the suit opened.
9. *** An Artificial opening Preempt below 3NT showing Length in an unknown suit when there are more than two possibilities for which suit is held.
10. *** An Artificial opening bid showing two suits, neither of which is known.
11. *** An Artificial Three-Suited opening bid (with or without known shortness) that does not show at least Average Strength.

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12. *** A 2-level or higher opening bid that could contain less than Average Strength showing a known suit and an unknown suit, where the unknown suit could be the suit opened.
13. *** A non-Forcing 2-level opening bid in first or second seat that has a Range greater than 9 HCP and could show less than Average Strength.
14. A Purely Destructive opening bid.
15. Psyching an Artificial opening bid.

Rule Exceptions

The following are exceptions to the rules listed under “Disallowed Opening Bids”:

1. Any opening bid which promises a Very Strong hand is allowed.
2. Any bid which requires Average Strength may be made with Near Average Strength in 3rd and 4th seats.
3. Any Artificial Preempt which would be otherwise allowed under the rules below may also contain Very Strong hands. The Very Strong hands may be any hand type, regardless of the stated restrictions to the Preempt.

Overcalls

1. *** After a Natural suit opening bid, a new suit Direct Overcall below 2NT that does not show at least one known suit unless that bid is an offer to play in No Trump or takeout of the opening bid.
2. After a Natural suit opening bid, an Artificial direct 1NT overcall that does not show one of the following:
 - a. A Strong hand; or
 - b. At least three cards in all of the unbid suits; or
 - c. At least 4-4 shape in two known suits; or
 - d. At least 5-4 shape in two suits, at least one of which is known.
3. A Purely Destructive overcall.
4. Psyching an Artificial overcall.

Responses and Rebids

1. Psyching an Artificial response below 2NT to an opening bid or an overcall.
2. Psychic Controls.

Lead and Carding Agreements

Encrypted Signals are never allowed when leading, following suit or discarding. Otherwise:

1. Opening lead: Any method may be used on opening lead. (Leading low from doubletons must be pre-alerted.)
2. First discard: Any method may be used on the first discard.

*** Following Suit & Discarding: Except for the first discard, only high-to-low or low-to-high ordering strategies are allowed when following suit or discarding.

- *Note: Distinct meanings for middle cards (vs. highest and lowest) are permissible.*
- *Note: Defining meanings for specific spots (2,4,6...), as opposed to relative high/low agreements, are permissible only on the first discard.*

In addition, a pair may be prohibited from playing any carding method when they are deemed to be playing it in a manner that does not maintain proper tempo. A decision that prohibits a pair from playing a particular carding method may be appealed to the tournament committee.

Examples

Definitions

1. **“Natural”**: A 2H opening showing both hearts and a minor is still Natural as long as it shows a heart suit of 5 or more cards.
2. **“Quasi-Natural”**: Many, but not all “could be short” 1C or 1D catchall openings fall into this category. A “could be short” 1C or 1D that could contain a singleton below a queen in the opened minor is not Quasi-Natural.
3. **“Purely Destructive Initial Action”**: The intent here is to eliminate bids which have little or no redeeming constructive merit. Note that just because a call is not Purely Destructive does not mean that it is allowed; many calls are restricted that do not meet the definition of Purely Destructive.

An overcall showing hearts or both spades and diamonds is not a Purely Destructive Initial Action, regardless of High Card Points, because it meets condition “d”, using condition “a” twice. (It contains 4+ hearts or it contains 4+ spades.) Similarly an overcall showing both red suits or both black suits is not a Purely Destructive Initial Action because it meets condition “d”. A “Cappelletti/Hamilton” 2C overcall showing a 1 suited hand is not a PDIA, as it meets condition “d” by choosing option “b” twice.

An example of a PDIA overcall would be a 1S “fert” overcall, showing any 13 cards and Pass=spades. An example of a PDIA opening bid would be 1C showing 0-7 HCP any shape.

4. **“Encrypted Signal”**: Encrypted signals are ones in which the method of signalling can be given to declarer but requires a “key” to unlock the meaning that is hidden from declarer but available to the defense.

For example, it is an Encrypted Signal for the defender with the lowest remaining spot card in a suit to switch from standard to upside down carding when declarer shows out of that suit. It is an Encrypted Signal if after an auction where declarer shows an exact number of cards in a suit, the defender with more cards in that suit plays standard while the defender with fewer cards plays upside down.

There are many common bridge situations which occur which are not considered Encrypted, even if the situation may not be immediately apparent to Declarer. For instance, it is not an Encrypted Signal when dummy has a long suit with no entry for the defender without the ace to give a count signal while the defender with the ace gives a different kind of signal. It is also not an Encrypted Signal to play a suit preference card when you believe your partner has led a singleton even though you normally play an attitude signal on the opening lead.

Changes in methodology that based in some predetermined way are also not Encrypted. For

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example, playing standard carding at trick one and upside down carding after trick one would not be considered Encrypted.

5. **“Psych”**: Generally, 2 cards fewer or an Ace weaker than the minimum expected for a bid would meet the definition of a Psych, as would an Ace stronger than the maximum expected.
6. **“Range”**: “15-17” is a range of three points (15, 16, and 17). “10-12 or 15-17” is a range of 8 points. (The difference between the extremes of 10 to 17 inclusive.) If a pair plays one NT range when Vul. or in certain seats (e.g., 15-17) and another NT range when Not Vul. or in other seats (e.g., 10-12), those are two distinct ranges of 3 points. It is only when a bid could be either 10-12 or 15-17 at the time making the bid that the range would be considered to be 8 points.
7. **“Rule of N”**: A hand with 11 High Card Points and 5-4-3-1 distribution would meet the “Rule of 20” ($11 + 5 + 4 = 20$), but not the “Rule of 21” or higher.

All Charts

Leads and Carding

1. High/Low and Low/High encoding allows for cards which are neither. For example, it is permissible to have a distinct meaning for each of the plays from 3 small spots so long as the cards have the same meaning based on their relative rank, not absolute. That is, the 2 from 234 and the 7 from 789 should mean the same. Likewise the 3 and 8, or 4 and 9. It is not permitted to “pre-define” the spots as being high or low (such as 234 is always low, 567 always middle, etc.) except on the first-discard.

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Passes Before Opening

1. [Restriction 1] An Agreement to open all hands in 3rd seat is not permitted, as it makes an opening pass Forcing.
2. [Restriction 2] An opening pass cannot have a split Range, such as 0-7 or 13-15 balanced.
3. [Restriction 2] You can pass hands with certain shapes even if you open other shapes with fewer high card points. For example, if you played an opening 2D showing any 4-4-4-1 with 15+ HCP, you could agree to pass all weaker 4-4-4-1 hands, even if your other 1-level openings could be much weaker than 15 HCPs, provided they could not be 4-4-4-1.

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Openings

1. [Restriction 1] (Quasi-)Natural opening bids at the 1 level must, by Agreement, have at least 8 HCP or meet the Rule of 17. Artificial opening bids at the 1 level must, by Agreement, have at least 10 HCP or meet the Rule of 19.
2. [Restriction 3] Transfer openings, such as those found in the "Little Major" or "Moscito" systems, are not permitted in segments of fewer than six boards. Transfer openings at the 1 level are Artificial and therefore must show at least Average strength.
3. [Restriction 4] Hands with 9 or fewer HCPs cannot be upgraded into any NT range. This does not apply to a psych. To be considered a psych, the hand must contain at least 4 HCP less the minimum.
4. [Restriction 5] An Agreement to open 1NT showing 11-15 is permitted, but actually showing 10-15 is not. If your agreed NT range is 11-15, you cannot upgrade 10 HCP hands or downgrade 16 HCP hands. This does not apply to a psych. To be considered a psych, the hand must contain at least 4 HCP less the minimum.
5. [Open+ 8-10] A Multi 2D(weak in either major) is permitted in segments longer than 5 boards. A 2H opening showing a weak 2-bid in either hearts or spades is not permitted in segments of any length.
6. [Open+ 8-10] Opening 3S to show a long solid minor is permitted, assuming it meets the Rule-of-17 because it is not considered a Preempt.
7. [Open+ 9] Opening 2NT to show a major-minor 2-suited hand is not permitted.
8. [Open+ 11] Mini-Roman type openings must show at least 10 HCP or meet the Rule of 19. These openings require a minimum of 11 HCP if 4-4-4-1, and 10 HCP if 5-4-3-1 or 5-4-4-0.
9. [Open+ 12] A 2H opening bid showing spades and another suit that might have less than Average Strength is not permitted. A 2H opening bid showing spades and a minor is permitted (since it does not contain hearts, the suit opened).
10. [Open+ 13] In first and second seat, you may not agree to open a Natural 2-bid with a Range of 10 HCP or more (unless the hand is always at least Average Strength).
11. [Rule Exception 2] It is legal to open a Quasi-natural 1D bid with xxxx KQxx Kx xxx in 3rd or fourth seat. It is not legal to open a natural 1NT with KQ109 KJ109 xxx xx in any seat.

Overcalls

1. [Restriction 1] Cuebids are not considered to be new suits. For example if a 1H opening showed both hearts and spades, then a 1S overcall could have any meaning.