Learning about the world, one fact at a time... Bernard Smith

Learning to Play Bridge - one advantage of bad bidding is that you can practice playing atrocious contracts

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Disclaimer: I've created these webpages on bridge from a broad collection of bits and pieces that I've picked up over the years. Most of the original references, etc. I've lost, but if there is a problem please just send me a message and I will add any references and links needed. I claim no originality in the compilation on these pages, however the mistakes and mis-quotes are all my own work.

My webpages are designed for people who play bridge, and would like to play better. I make no claim to being a good bridge player, and what I've collected here is the result of my own personal attempt to learn to play better bridge. Give me a lifetime and I might just make it.

One this webpage I try to rapidly cover:-

- The fact that bridge is essentially a game of communication
- The role of the System card or '<u>cheat sheet</u>'
- A little bit of history to introduce a few of the basic bidding concepts
- A very basic bidding system and some card play conventions
- And finally a few additional definitions that might be useful.

Bridge is a game of communication

Bridge is one of the world's most popular card games. Partnerships compete by playing a series of hands, and each hand is played in two parts: the auction (bidding) and playing the hand (trick-taking). The rules and techniques for playing the cards are a common feature of many card games, so it is the auction that makes bridge different.

Both in the bidding and play (defensive play), efficient communication between partners is vitally important. In tournaments the cards are the same for competing pairs, so the key is to bid and play the same cards better than the other pairs.

Bidding is about trying to find the best contract (auction result), but as in all auctions the next bid has to be higher, meaning that the more information exchanged, the higher the contract and the more difficult it becomes to 'make' that contract. The bidding system is much like a 'communication protocol', and various 'standard' protocols have been developed. Expert players may use quite a complex set of protocols, but it is often necessary to use a simplified system if they want to be comprehensible to other players. One way to do this is to develop a set of sub-protocols covering specific situations, e.g. bridge conventions. Each convention defines how players should bid in particular situations. And in many ways the bidding system is just a way to link the conventions together, a bit like the way the branches of a tree are all linked eventually to a central core or trunk. The rules of bridge state that the communication between partners cannot be encrypted. The specific communication protocols, rules and meanings must be told to the opponents before the game starts, and no hidden messages are allowed (a System Card or 'cheat sheet' is used). "No hidden messages" also refers to the social environment, i.e. no hand signals, secret signs, kicking under the table, or even hesitations in bidding or playing the cards.

In reality the bidding is not open-ended, it is limited to 38 words or phrases consisting of either (a) a bid with a suit and a level (with 35 possibilities), or (b) double, (c) redouble, and (d) Pass. On top of that all bids must be 'sufficient', i.e. equivalent to or higher than the previous bid. As such each bid is like a code, that described a meaning. In some cases that meaning can be very simple, in other cases a single code can describe a very long nested sequence of meaning.

The bidding or auction is all about communication. Some of the initial bids might not actually be about the final contract, they are designed to describe the strength and distribution of cards in a players hand. Given that there are an almost infinite number of possible bridge hands, bidding systems can quickly become very complex. And if bidding system must also adapt to opponents interfering, then that just make them even more complex. Given that slams and games bring premium points, many conventions are designed to check if a particular 'game' contract is possible.

One interesting perspective, and I don't know if it is totally true, is that expert players focus on 'slam-seeking'. When they have good cards they want to bid slams and collect 'bonus points'. The idea is that the bidding is designed to tell each other if a slam is not possible, or possible (or occasionally certain). The <u>Roman Key Card</u> convention is a very popular example of a slam-seeking communication protocol. So the idea is to rapidly find out if a slam is not possible, and then to focus on answering the question "is game possible". And if game is not possible, then the question is to find the lowest level (easiest, most profitable, ...) part-score possible. Often a partnership will only need (and might only have the possibility to declare) two bids to decided that a slam is

not possible, and these two bid might even tell them a game is not possible either.

What are the problems? Firstly, communication between partners might be limited and the opponents might try to block or confuse the exchange of information. Secondly, it might not be clear what the best contract is, even if you could see all the hands. Thirdly, it might not be clear what the best bidding sequence should be to arrive at the ideal contract. Often it is possible to limit the analysis to a sub-set of options, e.g. looking at how a particular convention worked. One example is how the Roman Key Card convention can be used to transmit information of 'key' cards **and** the Queen of trumps, and to decide which options are most effective.

How does this communication work in practice? <u>Larry Cohen</u> offered can excellent example of how to exploit the information communication by different players around the table. I've copied it below.

North ♠A-K-7-6 ♥5-4 ♦K-J-10-4 ♣4-3-2

South ♠Q-J-9-8-4 ♥A-7-2 ♦Q-3 ♠K-J-10

South opened 1♠, West intervened with 2♥, North bid 3♥ (a so-called <u>cue-bid</u> showing a good raise in Openers suit). South has a nice 13 HCP's and a useful ♠10, so concluded in 4♠. North's cue-bid is designed to transmit information, and cut communication between the Opponents. West lead ♥K. Larry goes on to describe his initial assessment of the hand. Every suit-contract hand should be approached with the same thinking process. **First step**, count the losers. On this hand, there are two heart losers, one diamond loser and two potential club losers.

Second step, what to do about our losers? It is possible to throw \blacklozenge or \heartsuit losers on the \blacklozenge in dummy or take a <u>finesse</u> in \blacklozenge . Which of these is likely to work? Throwing away heart losers is not now an option since the \heartsuit K lead knock will knock-out the heart stopper (\heartsuit A) and Opponents can then play the same suit as soon as they win a trick. So the question is finesse or discard? A finesse is always possible, but **the intervention of West would suggest that they are** holding most of the outstanding points and the finesse may not work. A better option is to look to discard \blacklozenge 's on the \blacklozenge 's. The third \heartsuit can be ruffed in dummy later on (assuming trumps are well distributed).

Third step, when to draw trumps? One idea is to win with the ♥A, draw trumps, force out the ♦A, and discard ♠'s. This plan may not work.

Fourth step, what could go wrong? Here you have **information from the auction**. Wests' overcall in 2♥ show an opening bid with five ♥, and the majority of the remaining points, so the ♠ finesse might lose. If East gets the lead, they can lead a ♠ to West. How to stop that from happening?

If your West has the A, then it can't be stopped. However, if West has the A (likely) then the task is to stop East winning a trick. If the A is with West,

East's only entry is in $\mathbf{\Psi}$'s, so you need to keep West on the lead. If South wins with the $\mathbf{\Psi}$ A, forces out \mathbf{A} in West hand, they could lead a low $\mathbf{\Psi}$ to East, and

receive back a ♠. How would West know to do this? East will discard ♥J on the lead, showing they have the ♥10.

How to stop this? On this first trick let West win with the Ψ K. South takes the next Ψ , removes Φ 's, forces out A with West, who now cannot reach East. Now South can discard Φ 's, contract made.

This describes how North-South used their 'communication protocol' to bid game, and how South exploited East-West's 'communication protocol' to make the contract.

The reality is that partners can decide to bid but ignore what their partner bids (not a very rewarding option), or they can working to understand partners bidding, i.e. each retaining a different 'communication protocol' but they learn to understand the protocol of the partner, and adapt theirs as needed. This second option can be quite successful, but incremental improvements will plateau after a few hundred hands. The third option is that each learn a common 'communication protocol'. This will take more time, but the results will be superior to the alternatives. The fourth, and most successful option is that the partnership adopt a 'communication protocol', and adapt it based upon training data (i.e. previously played and analysed bridge hands). It is estimated that this approach will produce better results but only after playing about 1,000 training hands. There are indications that a guided training approach produced even better results, i.e. the partnership is guided by an expert, to understand how to adopt and adapt the 'communication protocol' to their specific needs. This last phase appears particularly good at rapidly identifying and correcting mistakes in the application of the protocol.

It's worth noting that defense does require a degree of partnership understanding and communication, but the number of communication (i.e. <u>signalling</u>) options are limited. Because the communication channel between partners is so narrow, defence is primarily dependent on both partners being capable of strong independent analysis. It is in the bidding protocol where a partnership truly shows both the analytical and communication skills that will need to evolve and mature over time. Here is an <u>article</u> about what happens when a partnership tries to fast-forward that learning process by adding illicit (or encrypted) communication.

Cheat Sheets

A '<u>cheat sheet</u>' is a type of 'crib sheet', 'reference card' or System Card for the prior listing of a partnership's understandings. These cards can be consulted by the opponents in order to better understand the explanation provided by an opponent after a particular call (bid) or play is questioned.

SPECIAL DOUBLES	NOTRUMP OVERCALLS Direct: 15 to 18 Systems on ☑	NAMES	
Negative ✓ thru4H Responsive □ : thruMaximal □ Support: Dbl.□ thruRedbl □ Card-showing □ Min. Offshape T/0 □	Conv. Balancing:11to 14 (Sys ON) Jump to 2NT: Minors 2 Lowest Conv.	GENERAL 2/1 Game F Two Over One: GameForcing ☑ Game VERY LIGHT: Openings □ 3rd Hand ☑	APPROACH orcing AiB Level 1: Basic Forcing Except When Suit Rebid Overcalls Preempts
SIMPLE OVERCALL 1 level_7_to_18_HCP (usually) often 4 cards very light style Responses New Suit: Forcing NFConst NF Jump Raise: Forcing Inv. Weak Q = LR+	DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP Vs:	FORCING OPENING: 1 ♣ □ 2 ♣ ☑ Nat NOTRUMP OPENING 1NT 15 17 15 17 3 ♠ 6+ 5-card Major common ☑ 3♥ System on overX, 2C 3♠ 2 ♣ Stayman ☑ Puppet □	ural 2 Bids Other BIDS 2NT _ 20 _ to _ 21
JUMP OVERCALL Strong Intermediate Weak	OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE New Suit Forcing: 1 level □ 2 level □ Jump Shift: Forcing □ Inv. □ Weak 1 Redouble implies no fit □	2 ◆ Iransfer to ♥ ● 4 ◆ , 4 ♥ Iransfer to # Forcing Stayman Smolen 2 ♥ Transfer to ♠ ● Lebensohl □ 2 ▲ transfer to minor Neg. Double 2NT 8-9, invit	denies) Conventional NT Openings
OPENING PREEMPTS Sound Light Very Light 3/4-bids Conv./Resp.	2NT Over Limit+ Limit Weak Majors □ □ Minors □ □ Other	MAJOR OPENINGExpected Min. Length41st/2ndImage: Contract of the second s	MINOR OPENING NF Expected Min. Length 4 3 0-2 Conv. 1 A □ 1 □
DIRECT CUEBID OVER: Minor Major Natural Strong T/0 Michaels Michaels Min-max	VS Opening Preempts Double Is Takeout 1 thru 4H Penalty Conv. Takeout: Lebensohl 2NT Response Other:	3rd/4th Image: Conversion of the sector o	1 ◆
SLAM CONVENTIONS Gerber 2:	4NT: Blackwood □ RKC □ 1430 1 # of Kings	1NT: Forcing Semi-forcing 2NT: Forcing Inv. 3NT: to	Frequently bypass $4+ \blacklozenge \square$ $1NT/1 \spadesuit _ 6 to _ 10-$ $2NT$ Forcing \square Inv. $\square _ 10+$ to _ 12-
vs Interference: DOPI DEPO	Level: ROPI	Drury : Reverse 2-Way Fit	3NT: <u>12+</u> to <u>15</u>

What you see above is a typical **SAYC** (or <u>Standard American</u> Yellow Card) system card (often called 'cheat sheet') for what many people know in Europe as a version of the <u>5-card major</u> system. We can see some of the basics indicated, for example:-

- 5-card major, and better minor
- Weak 2's, including ♦'s
- 1 No Trump 15-17 points (and 15-18 points overcall)
- 2**♦** Strong (2♦ waiting)
- The partnership is playing 2 over 1 Game Forcing
- 2NT on minor opening Invitation 10-12 points
- Staymen, Jacoby and Texas (major and minor transfers)
- New suit Forcing
- Jump Raise on major Invitation
- Jump Raise on minor weak
- Negative Doubles and Take Out through to 4♥
- Michaels

'Cheat sheets' have nothing to do with <u>cheating at bridge</u>. <u>Here is a Wikipedia article</u> on a famous case concerning Fantoni and Nunes, two of the worlds best bridge plays, and both accused of cheating. This story is not finished, since many national teams refuse to play against Italy as long as Fantoni is in their team.

More prosaically we must note that **cheating is about a pre-mediated act** of illegally obtaining hand or card information from a partner without being detected. It is not the same as doing something which might be considered 'unethical', such as making an inference from a partner's hesitation. This type of thing can be sanctioned by a Tournament Director without establishing intent.

Cheating can take place at all levels.

In one analysis of the best pairs in the world in terms of defensive play the top 8 results were all registered by pairs that have either been convicted of cheating or had admitted to collusive cheating.

But cheating can occur at every level, for example a couple of women playing online in both local clubs and with the English Bridge Union were found guilty of illicit communication with each other, and they were suspended for 3 years.

Defensive and Competitive Bidding	- Leads	and Sign
Overcalls (Style; responses: 1/2 level; reopening)		
Benenses: Jump Paise = Preemptive	Opening	Leads -
Cue Rid = Forcing raise	Lead	In P
New Suit = Forcing Lives shift = fit	Suit	3rd
In Palancing Position: Same		4th
in balancing Position: Same	Subseq	n 1
Take-out double:	Other	2nd
General Style = Can be light / shaped	- Inch	
Responses: Natural. Cue bid = Forcing	Leads	
	Lead	VS. S
INT overcalls (2nd/4th live: responses: reopening)	Ace	AK
2nd Position = 16 - 18	King	KQ
Responses: Bid as INT opening	Queen Q	2]; Q]x(x)
Natural	Jack	J10;
4th Position = 10 - 14	10	109
Responses: Natural	9	9x;
Responses. Natural	- Hi-x	Sx;)
Jump Overcalls: (Style; responses; unusual NT)	Lo-x	HxS
I-Suit : Natural;	Signals in order of	
Responses - New suit = forcing	Partner's Lead De	
2-suit:- 1♣ - 2◊ = 5♡/5♠	1	Hi/le
Reopen: Cue = any good two suiter. 2NT = 19-21	2	Hi=
Direct and lump are Ride (Styles responses response)	3	S/P
Direct and jump cue bids (Style; responses; reopen)	- 1	Hi/le
Direct Cue Bid – Plichaels (Note 1)	2	Hi =
Netherlands and include the terms added	<u> </u>	S/P
Vs NT (vs Strong/weak; reopening; pH	Signals (i	ncluding
Landy (Note 3)	Echo in t	rump sui
Vs preempts (doubles, cue-Bids; jumps; NT bids	- Takeout	Doubles
Take out doubles thru 4♡	May be li	ght with
	Cue = F	until a su
Vs Artificial Strong Openings	New suit	= F1
	Reopen:	same as a
Over Opponents take out double	Special, a	artificial
New suit forcing at 1-level	Responsi	ve Dbl:A
Jump Shift non-forcing	Repeat sa	ame suit
Double Jump = Splinter / 2NT = limit raise or better	Over mir	or Micha
	Over Ma	or Micha

Leads and Signals			
Opening	Leads - style	*	
Lead	In Partner's Suit	WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION	
Suit	3rd / 5th 3rd / 5th	WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION	
NT	4th 3rd / 5th	Standard Card	
Subseq			
Other	2nd from 4 small		
		Suntan Summan	
Leads		System Summary	
Lead	Vs. Suit Vs. NT	General approach and Style	
Ace	AKx:Axxx(+) AK:AKx(+)	Natural, 5-card Majors	
King	KQ;AK; KQ109x KQ;AKJ10(x); KQ109(+)	Longer Minor - 1 + if 3.3	
Queen Q	2]; QJx(x) QJ; QJx(+); AQJx(+); KQx(+);	Limit jump raises over majors	
Jack	J10; J10x(+); KJ10x(+) J10; J10x(+); KJ10x(+)	INT response = not forcing	
10	109; 109x(+); H109x(+); 10x 109;		
9	9x; 98x(+) 98x(+)		
Hi-x	Sx; xxS Sx; Sxx; xSxx	INT Opening: 15 - 17	
Lo-x	HxS; HxSx(+); xSxx(+) HxS; HxxS(+);	2 over 1 response: Promises rebid (See Note 7)	
Signals in	order of Priority	Special Bids that may require defence	
Partner's	Lead Declarer's Lead Discarding	2 Opening = strong, near Game Force - any suit.(s) any shape	
1	Hi/lo = E Same Same	20 Opening = Weak 0 6+ (6-10 HCP)	
2	Hi=encouraging	20 Opening = Weak Major 6+ (6-10 HCP)	
3	S/P	2 Opening = Weak Major 6+ (6-10 HCP)	
1	Hi/lo = E Same Same	3NT Opening = Gambling	
2	Hi = encouraging	2NT Overcall = two lower unbid suits	
3	S/P	Michaels Cue-bids (Note 1)	
Signals (including trumps):		Lebensohl after 2-level overcall of INT (Note 2)	
Echo in trump suit shows ability to ruff		Negative Doubles to 3	
Takeout	Doubles (Style; responses reopening)		
May be lig	ght with classic shape		
Cue = F until a suit is bid twice;		Special Forcing Pass Sequences	
New suit	= FI		
Reopen: s	same as above		
Special, a	artificial and competitive doubles/redoubles	Important notes that don't fit elsewhere	
Responsive Dbl:After T/O Dble thru 4♡; after o/call thru 4♠		Double Jump in new suit = Splinter if minor over major	
Repeat same suit dble by Neg doubler = Take out (See Note 8)		Jump Cue Bid by Opener = Splinter raise	
Over min	or Michaels: Major = stopper		
Over Major Michaels: cue bid in opponents' major = limit raise		Psychics:	
or better		Rare	



The <u>World Bridge Federation</u> (WBF) has a special webpage dedicated to <u>System Card Editors and System Information</u>. You can download a blank system card and a guide to filling in the card, and where necessary providing supplementary sheets. There is also <u>an example standard card</u>, with supplementary information (standard maybe, but certainly not for beginners or occasional players). Above and below we can see the this example card.

Opening	Tick if Artificial	Min. No. Cards	Neg. Dbl. Thru'	Description	Responses	Subsequent Auction	Modifications over Competition and with Passed Partner
Pass				Not an Opening Bid			
I.		3	3♠	11 - 21 HCP	Single raise weaker than double raise Strong jump shift (1 & - 2 any)	4th suit forcing: game forcing; Reverses by opener forcing; by responder = Game forcing; Third suit = I Round Force	Jump Cue-bid over overcall = Splinter Cue bid for overcall = asks for a stopper Jump shift pre-emptive over overcalls
I¢		3	3♠	11 - 21 HCP	Single raise weaker than double raise Strong jump shift (1 - 2 any)	As above - NOTE 5 -	As above
I♡		5	3♠	11 - 21 HCP	INT not forcing, 5+ points Raises = limit, 2NT = FG with trump support	Raises = limit. Re-raise = Pre-emptive General principles as above	Cue bid over Comp = Strong Raise
I ≜		5	3♠	11 - 21 HCP	As for I♡	As for 1♡; 1♠ - 2♣ ; 2♠ - 3♠ = limit	As for I♡
INT				15 - 17 balanced	Jacoby Transfers: Note 9	Over Stayman: rebids are Major invitational, minor forcing	Dble at 3-level shows values. Dbl at 2-level is T/O
2♣			3♠	Artificial, strong - near Game Force, any suit,(s) any shape	Natural; positive requires good suit; 20 = neutral	Cheaper minor = second negative thru' 30	Natural
20		6	3♠	6 - 10 HCP	New suit forcing 2NT asks for feature if maximum	3NT = AKQxxx	Natural
2♡		6		6 - 10 HCP	New suit forcing 2NT asks for feature if maximum	3NT = AKQxxx	Natural
2♠		6		6 - 10 HCP	As for 2♡ opener	As for 2♡ opener	Natural
2NT				20 - 21 balanced	Jacoby Transfers; Stayman Note 9	2NT - 3♠ > ♠ 2NT - 3 ♠ 2NT - 4♣ > ◊ 3◊ - 3♡ = 5♠ + 4♡	Natural Dbl = Penalties
3 🌩		6		Pre-emptive	New Suit forcing		
30		6		Pre-emptive	New Suit forcing	Slam Approach and Conventions (including all	Slam-Interest Bids)
3♡		6		Pre-emptive	3♠ Natural. Minors = cue-bid	Five - Ace Blackwood: RKCB (Note 6) Cue	Bids
3♠		6		Pre-emptive	4⊽ Natural. Minors = cue-bid	Splinters GSF	
3NT		7(6)		Gambling	Natural		

Full disclosure does not require you to present your complete system. However, it does include a clear description of openings, responses, and early rounds of bidding with or without competition. And there are sections for conventions as well as other partnership agreements, styles and understandings. Full disclosure is a combination of what you reveal in your System Card and Supplementary Sheets (see the example below) and what you add at the table also without your opponents having to ask questions.

In cases where there is damage due to possible failure to disclose, the side that was not informed will be given the benefit of the doubt. If an opponent refrains from asking a question to which you should have provided the answer without prompting, and damage ensues, there is an 'a priori' assumption that you have not provided full disclosure. Of course each case is heard on its merits, but the warning is there.



WBF Standard Card

Supplementary Sheet

Note 1: Michaels Cue Bids:

 $(1 \diamondsuit) - 2 \diamondsuit$ $(1 \diamondsuit) - 2 \diamondsuit$ Both majors 5(+) / 5(+) $(1 \heartsuit) - 2 \heartsuit = 5 \bigstar + 5 \text{ minor}$ $(1 \bigstar) - 2 \bigstar = 5 \heartsuit + 5 \text{ minor}$ All jumps in known suits are PRE (but may be tactically strong)

Note 2: Lebensohl:

2NT forces 3. Responder may now pass or make a minimum bid in a suit, NF 2-level new suit bids are not encouraging. 3-level new-suit bids are forcing

INT (2x) 2NT (p) 3♣ (p) 3x = GF No Stopper

Note 3: Landy: (vs No Trump)

Penalty Double 2 \clubsuit shows at least four cards in each major suit = Landy $20/\sqrt[3]{\%} = Natural$

INT - 2♣ - ? 2◊ = relay to play the better major 2NT = strong inquiry (cue-bid!)

Note 4: Opener's Splinter Raise

Opener's rebid I level above either a jump shift or a forcing reverse is a game-forcing splinter raise.

Note 5. Resnances after NT rehid

Note 7: Non Forcing Sequences

1♠ - 2♣	l ≜ - 2 ⊈	♠ - 2♣
20/♡/♠ - 3♠	2◊/♡ - 2♠	2≎/⊽/ ≜ - 2NT
1♠ - 2♣	IM - 2 lower	
2♠ - 3 ♠	2NT = extra values	
100 14		

19 - 1♠

2♣ - 3♡ - limit raise

Note 8: Take Out Double

 $1 - 1 \circ - X =$ denies 4-card major $1 - 1 \circ - X =$ denies 4-

Take Out Double by Opener: shows three card support for responder and a non-minimum hand or a strong hand

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Note 9: Responses to 1NT and 2NT Opening

a) Stayman

INT	- 24:		2NT - 3 🖶
		2◊ = No Major	
		2♡ = 4♡	
		2♠ = 4♠	

b) Transfers

2◊ = 5+♡
2♡ = 5+♠
2♠ = 5+♠
2NT = Nat
3♣ = 5+◊
4◊ = 5♡+5♠

ONIT Come

Systems are categorise according to a colour code. Yellow for a HIGHLY UNUSUAL system, Green for fairly straightforward NATURAL systems, Blue if you play an always-STRONG CLUB, but otherwise mainly natural system. For everything else, if you employ artificial methods or some unusual treatments, use Red. In addition there are <u>Brown Sticker conventions</u> and the <u>Highly Unusual Method</u> (HUM identified by that yellow sticker). It is my understanding that these last two bidding systems are only allowed in specific competitions and tournaments.

The system cards can be full of abbreviations, such as "FG/1M", which means the pair are playing the 2 over 1 response, and any bid at the 2-level is forcing game (FG) when made over an opening 1^{\textcircled} or 1^{\textcircled} . However alternatives exist that it mean "FG except rebid", or simply "promises rebid", or " $1^{\diamondsuit} - 2^{\clubsuit}$ F2NT", and each must be indicated.

If players are flexible concerning the true range of points, e.g. 1 NT might mean 15-17 HCP but an overcall of 1NT might be 15-18 HCP, and if the team might open 1NT with a 'good' 14 HCP, then the true range should be indicated. One important point is that opening 1NT with a 5-card major, occasionally or always, must also be mentioned on the system card and (as far as I understand things) alerted as well.

The WBF system card guide offers this description as an example of the level of detail to be included on a system card.

5+M (semi-F 1NT), 5(4)+♦, 2+♠ w trf responses may be very light. Resp. jump to 2X = wk 4-7hp; NEG DBL thru 3♥; NAT wk 2; terrible NV 1+3 seat PRE (down to 0 hp); wide-range overcalls (good at 2-level), INV+ fit jmps in comp and by passed hand; ART 2NT in comp.

A rough translation would be as follows:-

- The first entry is a semi-forcing 1NT reply to an opening 5+ major. This would require an alert from the opener, explaining its "semi-forcing", it could also have been "forcing", but if simply a natural bid then no alert is needed. In many cases this does not describe the hand, and thus could be considered artificial, but it also indicates a willingness to play 1NT (and an opener with 5-3-3-2 and 12 points would be expected to pass).
- Frankly, I'm not 100% sure what 5(4)+♦ means, but you would just ask.
- Transfer bids may be very light, which is well known (even 0 points).
- Partner (responder) supports opener to 2-level, means a weak hand 4-7 points.

- Negative Double to be used until 3♥.
- Natural weak 2-level bids, i.e. no unusual features.
- Frankly, I'm not sure what "terrible NV 1+3 seat PRE (down to 0 hp)" means, but you would just ask.
- INV are invitational jumps when opponents are bidding, even if partner passed initially.
- Artificial (ART) 2NT when opponents opened, e.g. 2NT over an opponents 1♣ means 5+♥ and 5+♦.

An important requirement is that all bids that might require a special defence must be indicated. This covers both first-round bidding and competitive bidding. Often a pre-alerts must be given before the auction period begins on the first board of a round or match.

On the system card there is even a section entitled "not found elsewhere", so there is no excuse not to describe any non-standard bidding or play conventions used. And this should also include any forcing pass, double and double-redouble rules.

The English Bridge Union has a special webpage dedicated to System Cards, Editors and System Files. You can find a blank version of a system card, and examples of the pre-filled cards for "foundation level", "level 2", and "Benjaminised Acol" (which as far as I can see is just Acol with weak-two's). They also provide a foundation level standard Acol level description.

On this webpage we will first look at how simple <u>bidding systems</u> evolved and we will start on the long trip to understanding the meaning of each 'declaration' on the below 'cheat sheet' (check out this <u>list</u> of bridge terms and expressions).

Bridge Club's Cheat Sheet

based on American Standard at http://www.prairienet.org/bridge/basics.htm and Williams Bridge Club consensus, last rev 1/20/05

Opening:

with a typical unbalanced hand:

- < 13 points......PASS Note: if your hand has a very long suit (6+), check out the "Long Suit" section
- 13 to 20 points
- Five card major..... of major Otherwise..... of better minor Note: If your points are in the higher end of this range (17+) you may want to signal your partner, perhaps by jump-shifting over his response. 21+ points......2 C Note: you must have a 5+ card suit.

This is called the "strong 2."

with a balanced hand:

(no singletons or voids, I doubleton max)

15 to 17 points	1 NT
20 to 22 points	2 NT
25 to 27 points	3 NT
Otherwise I of better	r minor

with a long suit and low points:

(6+ cards in a suit, no opening s	trength)
< 13 points, 6 clubs	PASS
5 to 9 points, 6-card suit (not (C) 2 of suit
3 to 9 points, 7-card suit	3 of suit
10 to 12 points, 6+ card suit	
accepted as a bid as	

......consider a I-bid, or open weak

Responding to I of a major:

to I of a minor:

to I of a minor:	I
< 6 points. PASS	
With a 4+-card major suit	
6 to 12 points	
13+ points	C
Without 4-card major suit	1
6 to 9, support for partner	7
10 to 12, support	1
10 to 12, no supportBid new minor	
13+, unbalancedJump-shift	
13 to 15, balanced	

to a weak 2 or 3: (ie, not 2 clubs)

16 points	PASS
6+, support	
6+, no support	consider new suit bid or NT

Responding

to I no tr	amp:	
< 8 points		
8+ points: we us	e "Jacoby Transfer	c"
4+ hearts and	/or spades	
5+ hearts, <4 :	spades	
5+ spades, <4	hearts	
5+ of minor, 1	10 4+ major	
Otherwise (b	alanced)	
10 to 14 points, ba	lanced	
to 2 no tr	amp:	
< 3 points	•	
3 to 9 points, bala	nced	
3 to 9 points, unb	alanced	
	se Jacoby Transfer	at the
IO+ points		explor
We use "ste o to 3 points 4 to 6 points 7 to 9 points 10+ points	ps" for the first re	esponse:
Counting Point	s: Bi	d Hiera
Aces = 4	Voids = 3	I
Kines = 3	Singletons = 2	T
Oneens = 2	Doubletons = I	INT
Jacks = I	(sort of)	2D, 2H
-		
Combined point 3NT (game in	ts needed for cont NT): 26	racts:

Over time I hope to add other webpages dealing with the techniques for playing the cards, interventions, conventions, signalling, defence, ...

A Bit of History

The game we know today, so-called <u>contract bridge</u>, is said to have been invented in 1925 by an American called <u>Harold Vanderbilt</u>. Whilst based upon a variety of earlier card games, contract bridge introduced the idea of an auction to determine a 'contract' or commitment for a partnership to try to 'make' a certain number of 'tricks'. Failure to fulfil the contract resulted in a scoring penalty given to the 'defenders', and success resulted in the awarding of points to the 'declaring side'.

The story goes that Vanderbilt invented 'contract bridge' whilst on a cruise in 1925. Originally in auction bridge the score was calculated on the basis of the number of tricks made, and there were no game bonuses, etc. However, the original idea of a bonus for a 'game bid' was in fact already mention in 1914 and the name 'contract bridge' was already in use in ca. 1920. What Vanderbilt actually did was revise the <u>scoring system</u> with 'results going above and below the line' and he also introduced vulnerability thus making sacrifices more expensive. After testing his ideas on the cruise he recommended 20 points for a minor, 30 for the majors, 35 for No Trumps, and 100 for game. There was considerable resistance to these changes from established bridge writers and experts, because they thought it would be too complicated and discourage beginners. But Vanderbilt sold the idea to the rich and famous, and the riffraff finally followed suit in 1927.

Initially, **bidding systems** (the way the auction leads to the contract) were designed to permit a player to open one of a suit when they held a better than average hand, and to open at the two level with an even better hand, and at the three level with a very strong hand. This was the basis of the so-called <u>strong-two bids</u>. Today <u>weak-two bids</u> are common practice, and we will see what this means later on this webpage.

Four card major suits were once the standard opening one-level bid, and the search for a 4-4 fit was the cornerstone of many bidding systems. Now many of the popular bidding systems use an **opening** <u>5-card major</u>, and search for an early 5-3 fit.

Opening bids once required 13 points with a 4-card suit, 12 points with a 5-card suit, and only 11 points with a 6-card suit. **Today bridge players want to enter the bidding as quickly and as often as possible.** More than 50% of computer dealt bridge hands have partnership point counts between 17-23. **Aggressive players are willing to bid game with a 10-card suit and a 20-20 point split.** But if one pair is holding a 10-card suit, then it is likely the other pair also holds a 10-card suit, and therefore there is a potential for a double game swing. All the more reason to get in quick. Today bridge hands are usually <u>evaluated</u> according to **high-card points** (or <u>honour point count</u>) HCP added with some form of **distributional points system** designed to improve the accuracy of the bidding process. There are many different ways to describing specific types of hands, some of the most commonly used include descriptive bids, informatory bids, sign-off bids, <u>pre-emptive bids</u>, invitational bids, <u>forcing bids</u>, <u>asking bids</u>, <u>transfer bids</u>, <u>relay</u> <u>bids</u>, <u>take-out bids</u>, <u>cue bids</u>, <u>splinter</u>, <u>game-try</u>, <u>quantitative bids</u>, and lead directing bids (including doubles). Not forgetting all the artificial bidding and <u>conventions</u>, in opposition to so-called 'natural' bids.

Again in the old days a simple reply at the two level could be made with 7-8 points, so a partner would have to bid at the three level with a good suit and 11-12 points or more. Then bidding systems introduced the idea that a two level reply was <u>forcing</u> to 2 No Trumps (NT), or even game forcing. Today many players use a <u>2-over-1</u> forcing (usually to game), which creates a wider variety of bidding sequences (hence greater accuracy) to move to game or a slam. This means that a hand that is worth a bid over 1, but is not worth a game forcing bid 2-over-1, must be bid 1NT (even if it is not a 'balanced' hand).

Example: ♠A-K-3-2 ♥K-10-2 ♦K-J-3-2 ♣3-2

This hand has 14 HCP, enough for a **game-forcing 2-over-1** bid over an opening major. The game forcing bid would be 1 **€** - 2 **€** forcing game and showing a 4-card side suit. Over an opening 1 **€** many players would prefer to bid game-forcing 1 **€** - 2 **€** with the above hand, rather than show a 1 **€** on the first round.

Modern day bidding systems are now focussed on what is more successful when 1,000's of hands are analysed. And bidding systems evolve as new forms of defence are found to counter the advantages of a bidding innovation. Initially the weak No Trump (NT) was popular, but new styles of defence were introduced making the **strong NT** a better alternative today (see <u>Quantitative No Trump Bids</u>). All NT bids should define no more than a 3-point range (better still a 2-point range) and a very specific set of distributions, and above all should inform the partner as to whether to continue bidding or not.

Weak-two's, No Trumps, pre-emptive bids, are all **limited bids** in that they are made with specific types of distributions and a fixed maximum number of points (high-card points or otherwise). No Trump bids define a narrow range of high-card points. The idea is that a limit bid tells partner about distribution and points with just one bid.

Example: ♠A-J-6 ♥9-6 ♦Q-5-3-2 ♣Q-6-4-3

This is a typical **limit bid** with partner bidding 1NT over an opening 1 . Partner promises 6-9 HCP and no fit in Openers suit. A balanced hand is **not** a requirement for this type of bid. The key message is "Partner, I can't support your suit, I don't have a 4-card *f* suit, but I must keep the bidding open, and I don't have 10 HCP's".

An **opening weak-two bid** should be about 8 points (range 6-10) with a robust 6-card suit with two of the top three honours, or three of the top five honours (the 10 is a honour). If the remainder of the cards are dealt out, the partner should receive about 10-12 high-card points and 2 cards in the opening suit, precisely the combined points and cards to justify a 2♥ or 2♠ contract. The same logic applies with the same number of combined points and a distribution 5-3, or 4-4 with the possibility to <u>ruff</u>. Computer simulations show that 2♥ or 2♠ will make, or go down with a profit. So in all cases it is desirable to get to a two level contract as quickly as possible.

Take a good hand with a 6-card major in front of a partner opening a **weak-two** in the other major. If the respective fits are 6-1 in both majors computer simulations show that **it is better to play the contract in the 6-card major of the weaker hand**. In fact computer simulations strongly suggest that if there is a misfit (type 6-1), it is always better to play in the long suit of the **weaker** partner.

Another good reason to allow the opening **weak-two** bid is that it allows partner to make a T.N.T. (<u>Total Number of Tricks</u>) **raise based upon the number of cards they are holding in that suit**. So in front of a weak two, partner should pass with a weak hand and only 2-card support. However with the same weak hand they should raise to the 3-level with 3-card support, and to the 4-level with 4-card support, taking into consideration the vulnerability. The raise to game over a weak-two can also be because partner is strong, so often the opponents are not willing to double because they are uncertain about the exact nature of the game bid.

A final reason to use the opening **weak-two** bid is that otherwise the player would be forced to pass and then later be forced to reply 1NT despite holding a 6-card suit (remember many partnerships play the 2-over-1 forcing game).

The <u>Stayman Convention</u>, despite being first published in 1945, is still an essential part of most bidding system. In its simplest form it looks for a 4-4 card suit fit in a major after an opening 1 No Trump or 2 No Trump. The 2 is a convention and since it is artificial, it is a forcing bid. The replies 2 and 2 NT are also artificial, and thus forcing. Whilst the basic convention is easy to follow, there are numerous variations.

Example: ♠A-J-9-2 ♥7-6 ♦Q-10-5-3-2 ♣Q-6

This is a typical Stayman 2 & hand. Partner will raise Opener's reply in A, otherwise they will bid an invitational 2NT.

Transfers (Jacoby) and <u>relays</u> are now common in most bidding systems, simply because they significantly extend the range of possible bids open to the partnership. For example, a 2NT following a transfer bid over an opening 1NT can have additional meaning based upon the partnership agreement.

Example: ♠A-J-10-6-5 ♥9-6 ♦8-5 ♠10-6-4-3

This is a typical 2♥ transfer. Partner will pass Opener's reply in 2 ₽.

Some people call Jacoby transfers Texas transfers, whereas others consider them two different conventions. The Jacoby transfer forces Opener to rebid in the suit ranked just above that bid by Responder. For example, a response 2 forces Opener to rebid 2, and this type of bid can be made with 0 points. Jacoby transfers are used to show a weak hand with a 5+ major suit, and to ensure that Opener will play the final contract, preventing the opponents from seeing the cards in the stronger hand. There also exists a transfer in minor suits, promising 6+ cards.

The Texas transfer is an extension of the Jacoby transfer convention, enabling the No-Trump Opener to become Declarer when the Responder holds 5+ in either major suit and is strong enough to at least bid game, knowing that Opener can hold no fewer than 2-cards in that major suit. I have also seen Texas transfer only being applied with a 6+ card major. With game-level or slam-level holdings Responder jumps to 4 and Opener bids 4 , etc. This jump minimises any potential, obstructive interference from the Opponents, and as well facilitates certain slam bidding sequences. Texas and Jacoby transfer bids, are denoted in "blue" on the convention card and, thus, require Opener to inform Opponents. As with Stayman, transfers can also be made on an opening 2NT.

Variations on the slam convention <u>Roman Blackwood</u> are also now common and provide a powerful way to quickly determine the number of 'key' cards held by partner, and even if partner is also holding the Queen of trumps. Given that 3NT+1 is always better than 5 are 5 , some partnerships are using the 4 as a Roman Blackwood request for a slam in a minor suit.

Historically very strong suits were opened with a <u>strong-two bid</u> (or forcing two bid). Many, if not most players, have now moved to the weak-two bid with 2[•] and 2[•]. Concerning the opening 2[•] and 2[•], some players use an artificial <u>strong 2[•]</u> as a single convention defining a hand that is too strong for a onelevel bid. This declaration is forcing and covers a wide variations of points and distributions, and with this the opening 2[•] becomes another weak-two bid. Other players have retained both artificial 2[•] and 2[•] as conventions show strong hands, 2[•] becomes a forcing 'indeterminate' (20-23 HCP+distribution) and 2[•] forcing game (24 HCP+distribution). Some players have retained the strong 2[•] and 2[•], but have defined 2[•] as 'intermediate' 18-20 HCP+distribution, and 2[•] 21+ points. The 2 No Trumps bid is natural and means 20-21 high-card points.

Example: ♠A-K-Q-9-8 ♥A-K-6 ♦A-3-2 ♣5-2

This is a typical 24 forcing hand. Opener has 20 HCP, a solid 5-card 4 and 5 losers.

Example: ♠A-K-Q-J-9-8-6 ♥A-K-10 ♦6-5-3 ♣-

This is a typical strong 2♦ game forcing. Despite having just 17 HCP, this hand has only 4 losers.

One finally point concerns **game contracts in the minor suits**. Today the view is that with something like 28-29 points needed for a successful game contract in a minor, the better contract will usually be 3NT with probable over-tricks. Even playing 1NT has the same score (90) as a 2-level part-score in a minor, and to equal 1NT+1 (120 points part-score) a partnership will need to win 10 tricks in a minor suit.

The above 'little history' is just to remind the reader about some of the key principles that they will be expected to apply in adopting a bidding system and conventions.

A very good starting point is to think of all bids (including Pass) as having an approved range of points, and as being defined as either sign-off, encouraging, invitational, forcing, or forcing to game (or eventually slam).

Silly contracts are always linked to one partner forgetting one or more of the basic rules of their agreed bidding system.

Eddie Kantar produced his 52 Facts of Bridge Life, which of course you and I know all about. However it's a useful list to give to a Partner who might not know all the 58 facts of life (yes, 58).

A very basic bidding system

Where to start? My guess is that it is almost impossible to start to play bridge alone in a corner. By far the easiest way is to take some lessons, or let a friend introduce the basics.

The next step is to fix on **a minimum number of rules for bidding**. Below I have tried to isolate a minimum set of rule for opening the bidding, for responding to an opening bid, for exchanging bids with partner, for competing with opponents, and ending with a few card play conventions.

Meaning of opening bids

To bid the 1 level you need a minimum of 12 HCP or at least 14 DH

♠Q-J-9-8-4 ♥A-4-2 ♦A-9-2 ♠7-5 - only 11 HCP - can not open (but some people would)
♠K-J-2 ♥A-Q-10-9-4 ♦A-9-4 ♣3-2 - 14 HCP - 5-card major - open 1♥
♠K-J-2 ♥A-10-9-4 ♦A-Q-9-4 ♣3-2 - 14 HCP - no 5-card major - open 1♥
♠K-10 ♥A-10-9-7-4-2 ♦A-9-4-2 ♣3 - 11 HCP - 14 DH - open 1♥
♠Q-J-3 ♥Q-10-9-8-4 ♦K-J-4 ♣Q-J - 12 HCP - but poor hand - not worth opening

Opening bids at the 1 level - **Better minor** For a minor suit opening, you open the longest minor suit.

♠A-J-3 ♥Q-10-9 ♦K-J-8-4 ♣Q-J - weak 14 HCP - no 5-card major - open 1♦

With equal length, you always open 1 diamond, except with 3/3 in the minors. In that case, you open 1 club.

♠A-J-4-2 ♥Q-10-9 ♦K-J-8 ♠Q-10-3 - 13 HCP - open 1♣
♠A-J-4-2 ♥Q-10-9-3 ♦K-J-8 ♠Q-10 - 13 HCP - open 1♦

Open bid of **1NT opening bid** - 15-17 HCP (No 5-card major)

♠A-K-3 ♥A-9-8 ♦A-J-9-2 ♣10-7-6 - 16 HCP - open 1NT

♦K-6 **♥**A-K-6-3 **♦**A-Q-8-3-2 **♦**5-2 - 16 HCP - not a NT distribution - open 1**♦**

2 club opening bid unspecified strong - 18-23 HCP with good long suit or a balanced hand with 22-23 HCP

 $A-K-J-10-9-5-2 = A-Q \in K-J-10 = 5 - 18 \text{ HCP} - \text{game possible with a little help - bid } 2 = A-Q-J-7 = A-Q-9 \in K-J-10 = K-Q-J - 23 \text{ HCP} - \text{open } 2 = 2 + \text{, then bid } 2\text{NT} \text{ (indicating } 22-24 \text{ HCP})$

2 diamond opening bid game forcing - 24+ HCP or a game going hand (16 HCP minimum)

♠A ♥A-K-10-8-7-4 ♦A-K-J-4 ♠K-3 - 22 HCP - only 3 losers - bid 2♦ forcing game

2 hearts/spades opening bid natural weak - 5-10 HCP and 6 good cards

◆A-Q-J-10-x-x ♥x ◆x-x-x ◆x-x-x - 8 HCP with solid 6-card major - bid 2◆

♠x-x ♥Q-J-10-9-5-3 ♦x-x-x ♠x-x - 3 HCP with good 6-card major - Pass

Opening 2NT - 20-21 HCP

♠A-Q-J ♥A-J-9 ♦K-J-10-2 ♣K-Q-8 - 21 HCP - bid 2NT

Preemptive opening bid - 5-10 HCP with good 7-card suit with 2 high honours or 3 honours

♠K-Q-J-10-7-5-4 ♥8-3-2 ♦3 ♠7-3 - 6 HCP - good 7-card suit - bid 3♠♠8 ♥A-Q-8-7-6-4-2 ♦Q-8-6-2 ♠3 - 8 HCP - good 7-card suit - bid 3♥
♠9-2 ♥10-3 ♦Q-J-10-8-7-5-3 ♠Q-8 - 5 HCP - poor distribution - good 7-card suit - Pass
♠9-5 ♥- ♦K-7-3-2 ♣K-J-9-7-6-5-2 - 7 HCP - good distribution - average 7-card suit - bid 3♣

A few additional definitions

This is a rather pedantic section that just looks at a few descriptions of words and phrases often encountered in bridge books, etc., but rarely defined in detail. For example, what is a 'robust' suit or a 'guarded' honour?

What is 'playing strength'? It is just the addition of the honour or high-card points (HCP) and the addition or subtraction of distributional points. The playing strength can change as the bidding progresses.

What is a 'guarded honour'? It is an honour card (e.g. King) that is 'protected' by a sufficient number of smaller card x-x-x.... in the same suit. For example, a K-x is guarded, but a Q-x is unguarded, however the Queen is guarded in Q-x-x and in a A-Q doubleton. A higher honour card can also guard a lower honour card, so the Jack in J-x-x-x is guarded as is the Jack in K-J-x. To guard a 10 you need 10-x-x-x or Q-10-x-x.

What is an 'artificial' bid? A 'natural' bid implies that the contract should be played in the suit that is bid, all other declarations are 'artificial'.

What is a 'forcing' bid? It is a bid that forces partner to bid if their Right-Hand Opponent (RHO) passes. In many systems forcing bids promise only strength, not distribution (this should be an explicit agreement in a partnership). A specific type of forcing bid is 'game forcing', which is **mutually forcing** on the partnership to reach a game contract.

What is a 'free' bid? This is any bid made where there was no longer an obligation on partner to bid.

What is a 'solid' or 'robust' suit? A solid 5-card suit is A-K-Q-J-x or A-K-Q-10-x, a solid 6-card suit is A-K-Q-10-x-x. So a solid suit is always headed by A-K-Q. A robust suit is one that hold 2 of the top 3 honours, or 3 of the top 5 honours. Weak-two's and pre-empts are made with robust suits.

What are 'honour-tricks'? Honour-tricks depend upon the honours held, A-K or A-Q-J are 2 honour-tricks, A-Q, K-Q-J or A-J-10 are 1½ honour-tricks, an A or K-Q or K-J-10 is 1 honour-trick, and K-x and Q-J-x is ½ an honour-trick.

What is a 'stopper'? A stopper is a suit containing 1 honour-trick (see above), and a **potential stopper** is a suit containing a ½ honour-trick. A '**double stopper**' in a suit bid by the Right-Hand Opponent (RHO) should be where length+HCP equal to 8, e.g. A-x-x-x or K-Q-x. A double stopper held in the suit bid by the Left-Hand Opponent (LHO) should include A-K, or A-J-10, or K-Q-J.

What is a 'biddable' or 're-biddable' suit? Different systems have different definitions of a biddable suit. One definition is a 4-card suit containing 4+ HCP, or any 5-card suit. A re-biddable suit is one where the suit could still be bid if the two lowest cards were removed, e.g. A-Q-x-x-x is re-biddable, but K-J-x-x-x is not re-biddable. These definitions must be the subject of a partnership agreement.

What is a 'balanced' hand or an 'unbalanced' hand? A balanced hand is one containing no more than 1 doubleton. A semi-balanced hand is the distribution 5-4-2-2, containing no singletons or voids. An unbalanced hand starts with 6-3-2-2 or 7-2-2-2, or a hand containing a singleton or void (starting with 4-4-4-1). Some definitions include 6-3-2-2 and 7-2-2-2 as semi-balanced, and this must be decided by the partnership.

What does 'support' or 'fit' mean? Support starts with 2-cards in Partners suit. Support is when it is evident that the partnership hold 8+ cards in a suit or 7cards containing 6+ HCP. Good support means that if the lowest card is removed Partner still has support, e.g. so J-10-x or x-x-x-x or better. Very good support means holding a biddable hand in the suit proposed by Partner. A fit is when the partnership holds sufficient cards and HCP for an agreed trump suit.

What are a 'raise', a 'preference bid' and a 'take-out' bid? If Partner has a free bid or if Partner supports Openers suit above the minimum level of reply, it

is a raise (e.g. $1 \oplus -$ Pass - $2 \oplus$ is a raise as is $1 \oplus - 1 \oplus - 3 \oplus$). A **preference bid** is $1 \oplus - 1 \oplus - 2 \oplus$ means "I prefer to play $2 \oplus$ rather than Pass". A preference bid is also where a player expresses a preference for one of two suits bid by Partner. A **take-out** is a natural bid that is neither a raise nor a preference bid (note this is not a take-out double).

What is a 'limit' bid? These are bids that define an upper limit, or a small range of points. Raises, rebids, and No Trump bids are limit bids, as are the weaktwo opening bids. Some players using strong 2♠ and 2♦ will have a limit bid on 2♠. Some players consider pre-empts a limit bid as well. What is 'offensive' and 'defensive' potential? Offensive potential is the trick potential of the suit added to the honour tricks held in the other suits, and trick potential depends upon the strength and length of the suit. An opening bid promises an offensive hand of 7 tricks assuming that partner delivers a 'fit' and about 8-10 DH (i.e. together 20-22 DH). A partnership bidding to a 2-level would expect to have an offensive potential of 8 tricks. An opening weak-two is made with a decent offensive hand but where a 1-level bid would overstate its defensive potential. A pre-empt promises an offensive potential of 7 tricks (assuming minimum support from partner), and poor defensive potential (usually max. 1½ defensive tricks in total). If the different between offensive and defensive potential is 5 tricks or more the hands are offensively oriented, otherwise much depends upon the evolution of the bidding. *These additional definitions were inspired by those provided for the original Computer Oriented Bridge Analysis program from the 80's*.

http://www.bernardsmith.eu/cabinet_de_curiosites/bridge/