

Rules for Strong Openings – No Fear

Acknowledgements to <http://www.brisbridge.co.uk>, well worth a visit with plenty of articles on bidding and play.

Requirements for opening Strong Twos

A Conventional 2 Club opening, in Acol should show 23+ points or virtually a game hand such as two suits AKQJ65, AKQ98, 76, void. Only 19 points but there has to be a game in one of the Majors.

Opening a strong 2 Diamonds, Hearts or Spades

There are two things involved here.

First what is sensible bidding? The answer to that is simply, as with all things in bidding, describing your hand accurately to your partner according to your agreements.

In the UK, if you are playing at a Club or in any competition run under English Bridge Union Rules then for some reason they have decided to impose restrictions on what they consider "strong" and if your hand doesn't fit these rules you will effectively be making an illegal bid but remember only if the event is licensed by the EBU.

The following is an extended extract from the from the EBU 2010 updated Orange Book.

Rule 10B4 says

Strong openings are often described as 'Extended Rule of 25' which means the **minimum** allowed is any of the following

a) subject to proper disclosure, a hand that contains as a minimum the normal highcard strength associated with a one-level opening **and** at least eight clear cut tricks, (see below)

or b) any hand meeting the Rule of 25- (high card points +number of cards in two longest suits)

Any hand worthy of a 2 Club opener would always fit

or c) any hand of at least 16 HCPs

Examples: ♠A K Q J x x x x x ♥ x♦ x x ♣ x does count as 8 clear-cut tricks.

♠A K Q x x x x x ♥ x x ♦ x x ♣ x does not.

Clear-cut tricks are clarified as tricks expected to make opposite a void in partner's hand and the second best suit break.

Further examples:

AKQxxxx (7 CCT),

KQJxxxx (5),

AQJ98xx (5),

KQJT x (3)

KQJTxxx (6),

AKT9xxxx (8)

KJTxxx (2)

So if you look at the first one on this list that holding is defined as 7 tricks so if you had an Ace or KQ in another 3 card suit this would add up to 13 or 14 points (normal as required for a one level opening) and so perfectly legal to open STRONG (the 8 coming from the 7 in trumps and 1 from the other suits) If you look at the second last one although there are 8 tricks in this suit it only contains 7 points but you must have a minimum of normal opening points so you couldn't open 2 with just that but add any other 6 or 7 points, to make 13 or 14 , even say a hand with AKT9xxxx QJx, K you could.

Remember you don't have to open at the two level, all the rule is saying is that if you do, in an EBU licensed competition, these are the minimum requirements.

So what are the sensible holdings to open at the two level without deceiving your partner and getting too high.

If you use the above as a **basis**, but if not playing under the "rules" be a bit flexible but not too much you, won't go far wrong.

An example that doesn't fit the "rules" but which most people would open 2 Spades with might be:

♠A K 10 9 8 4 3 2 ♥A Q ♦9 ♣86

Only 7 clear cut tricks, 6 Spades and the Ace of Hearts. 13 points- just okay, but only 23 on rules of 25- technically this would be illegal under EBU rules but most would want to open 2 Spades and many would.

Definitions

There are three definitions that need to be understood.

Rule of 25: A hand meets the Rule of 25 if the total of the high card points (HCPs) plus the number of cards in the two longest suits is 25 or more.

Extended Rule of 25: A hand meets the Extended Rule of 25 if it meets the Rule of 25, or it contains at least 16 HCPs, or it contains, as a minimum, the normal high-card strength associated with a one-level opening and at least eight clear cut tricks.

Clear cut tricks are defined as tricks expected to make opposite a void in partner's hand and the second best suit break. Examples: AKQJxxxx (8 CCT), AKQxxxxx (7), KQJxxxx (5), AQJ98xx (5), KQJTxx (3), KQJTxxx (6), AKT9xxxxx (8), KJTxxx (2).

It is clear from these examples that '8 clear cut tricks' is stronger than '8 playing tricks' and is much stronger than '5 losers'.

Implications

Basic Acol 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠, which show 8 playing tricks in the suit bid, are permitted.

It follows that an artificial opening which shows an Acol Two is no longer a 'strong hand' unless it shows at least 'Extended Rule of 25'. Thus any agreement under which an artificial opening bid shows an Acol Two is NO LONGER PERMITTED unless it shows at least such strength. For example, an game forcing Acol 2♣ or a Benjamin Acol 2♦ opening bid must show at least 'Extended Rule of 25'.

As an example, this rule means that you cannot agree to open an Acol Two in any suit (or a Benjamin 2♣) with a hand such as

082

or

0842

as neither of these is Strong under the above definition. If you do so, and the TD decides that this was an agreed part of your system, your result on the hand may be cancelled. If you wish, you can open the first hand 2♠, and the second 2♥, as long as these are announced as “Intermediate to Strong”.

So, with AKQJxxxx; xx; xx; x you may make a strong opening

But with AKQxxxxx; xx; xx; x you may not.