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Convention Charts Update

26 July 2017
Version 0.1

Introduction

The convention chart subcommittee has produced four new convention charts in order from least to most permissive, the White Chart, Green Chart, Yellow Chart, and Red Chart. The White Chart and Green chart are intended for limited master point events and are expressed similarly to the old charts when a list of permitted methods. The Yellow Chart and Red Chart are intended for open events, and methods are generally allowed unless they are prohibited by the chart.

In addition to the charts there is a comprehensive definitions section. Any word that is capitalized on the chart is defined there. Following the chart is an examples section for cases where the chart might be misinterpreted. It is intended that both the definitions and the examples be propagated with the charts.

Chart Usage

Tournaments

Pair Events and non-KO Team Events

White Chart - Any event where the upper limit per player is 750 or less

Green Chart - Any event where the upper limit per player is 2500 or less

Yellow Chart - Any Open event and any event with a masterpoint limit above 2500 at a Sectional, any Open 1-Session event at a Regional, any event with a masterpoint limit above 2500 at a Regional, and any NABC event with a masterpoint limit between 2501 and 5000.

Red Chart - Any Open 2+-Session event at a Regional, any Open NABC event, and any NABC event with a masterpoint limit above 5000.

Knockout Events

A 1-bracket knockout always uses the Yellow Chart.

For knockouts with more than one bracket, the Yellow Chart is used in most brackets with these exceptions:

Red Chart - Top bracket (regardless of the team masterpoint holdings) and any other bracket where the lowest team has 8000+ masterpoints

White Chart - Any bracket where the highest team has less than 1000 masterpoints

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Green Chart - Any bracket where the highest team has less than 4000 masterpoints (that is not eligible for the White Chart).

Note that when a team is allowed by the directors to play in a higher bracket than their masterpoint holding would qualify them for, its masterpoint total is ignored for determining which chart to apply.

Club Games

The Yellow Chart is the recommended chart for most Open club games. Particularly advanced clubs may wish to use the Red Chart, and clubs that mostly cater to newer players may wish to use the Green Chart. The Green and White charts are recommended for masterpoint restricted games at clubs.

Pre-alerts and Written Defenses

There are two classes of methods that are particularly difficult to defend against, allowed only in segments of six boards or longer, and only in events governed by the Red Chart. Any method that is allowed in an event, but based on #3 or #7 of the Opening Bids section of the Red Chart would not be allowed in an event with segments of fewer than six boards should both require a pre-alert, and be eligible for written defenses.

~~We recommend a change from the existing procedure for written defenses. Rather than requiring a pair playing a method to bring an ACBL approved defense for their opponent, pairs are allowed to bring whatever written defenses they want to methods their opponents are playing that are eligible for written defenses. One of the intentional goals of the Red Chart is to allow more methods at the highest level. Requiring approval of a written defense for each new method or variation would prevent this from happening. That said, it would be entirely appropriate for the ACBL to continue to maintain a set of suggested defenses to commonly played methods that are eligible.~~

Based on feedback, Red Chart #3/#7 methods will still require defenses provided by pair playing the methods. Official ACBL defenses should be used where possible. In the event that a convention does not yet have an official defense:

- A defense must be submitted for approval.
- The submitted defense should be supplied to any opponents, even prior to receiving approval for that defense.

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CONVENTION CHARTS

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.

1. **“By Agreement”**: Partnership understandings as to the methods adopted by a 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.
2. **“Natural”**:
 - a. Any opening bid, response, or overcall at the one-level showing 4 or more cards in the suit bid.
 - 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.
 - d. Any response or rebid in a major at the two-level or higher showing 4 or more cards.
 - 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.
 - 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 showing a pattern meeting the definition of a natural NT opening.

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- b. Any opening bid at the two-level or higher showing 4 or more cards in the suit bid.
- 4. **“Artificial”**: Any call that is not natural or quasi-natural.
- 5. **“Bid”**: A call that names a level and a denomination (suit or notrump).
- 6. **“Call”**: Any bid, pass, double, or redouble.
- 7. **“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.
- 8. **“Control Bid”**: A bid showing first or second round control of a suit.
- 9. **“High Card Points (HCP)”**: The total number of points in a hand counting 4 for an Ace, 3 for a King, 2 for a Queen, and 1 for a Jack.
- 10. **“Rule of N”**: A method of determining hand strength computed by adding the High Card Points of the hand to the lengths of the two longest suits. To meet the “Rule of N”, this total must be at least N.
- 11. **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. 14 HCP and meets the “Rule of 24”.
 - 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.
- 12. **“Range”**: One more than the difference between the highest number of HCP a bid can be and the lowest.
- 13. **“Psych”**: A call that intentionally and grossly misstates the strength and/or suit length of one’s hand. 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.
- 14. **“Psychic Control”**: Any Bid that conveys that a prior Bid was a psych.

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15. **“Balancing Seat”**: After the bidding has been opened, a player who would end the auction if that player passed.
16. **“Forcing”**: A call that, by partnership agreement, may not be passed if the intervening opponent passes.
17. **“Purely Destructive Initial Action”**: An opening bid or an overcall that does not satisfy at least one 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.
18. **“Invitational”**: A hand sufficiently strong to indicate that partner should bid game unless partner has a minimum.
19. **“Preempt”**: A jump bid (by either pair) that includes hands in the Weak range.
20. **“Opener”**: The first player to make a bid in the auction.
21. **“Responder”**: Opener’s partner.
22. **“Overcall”**: The first bid made by the pair that does not consist of Opener and Responder.
23. **“Direct Overcall”**: An immediate overcall by the left hand opponent of Opener.
24. **“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 have the type of signal (attitude, count, suit preference) dependent on information known only to the defenders.
25. **“Three-suited”**: A hand with 4-4-4-1, 5-4-3-1, or 5-4-4-0 shape.

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Red Chart

Bidding agreements are allowed unless they are specifically disallowed. If an agreement is allowed because a disallowed agreement includes 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.

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

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 that does not show at least one known suit and may have length only in the suit opened.
9. An Artificial opening Preempt showing length in an unknown suit when there are more than two possibilities for which suit is held. However Artificial Preempts that are otherwise permitted may also contain one or more Strong meanings.

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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.
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 of greater than 9 HCP and could show less than Average Strength.
14. A Purely Destructive opening bid.
15. Psyching an Artificial opening bid.

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 Later Calls

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

Note: Almost all agreements are allowed beginning with Responder's initial action.

Lead and Carding Agreements

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.*

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- *Note: Defining meanings to specific spots (2,4,6...) vs relative high/low is only permissible on the first discard.*

Encrypted signals are not allowed when leading, following suit or discarding.

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.

Yellow Chart

Bidding agreements are allowed unless they are specifically disallowed. If an agreement is allowed because a disallowed agreement includes 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.

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

1. A Natural or Quasi-Natural 1-level opening bid in any 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. A non-forcing 1NT opening that does not meet the definition of Natural.
7. An Artificial opening Preempt below 3NT; except, 2NT may be used to show two known suits.
8. An Artificial opening bid showing two suits, neither of which is known.
9. An Artificial three-suited opening bid (with or without known shortness) that does not show at least Average Strength.
10. 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.

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11. A non-forcing 2-level opening bid in first or second seat that has a range of greater than 9 HCP and could show less than Average Strength.
12. A Purely Destructive opening bid.
13. Psyching an Artificial opening bid.

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 Later Calls

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

Note: Almost all agreements are allowed beginning with Responder's initial action.

Lead and Carding Agreements

<Same as Red Chart>

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Green Chart

Bidding agreements are disallowed unless they are specifically allowed.

Allowed Bidding Agreements

Opening Bids

1. Any opening bid in a suit which is Natural, as long as it shows at least Near-Average Strength.
2. Any 1C or 1D opening bid showing at least Average Strength.
3. A Natural NT opening bid, as long as it shows at least 10 HCP and the range is not greater than 5 HCP.
4. Any 1NT opening bid that is Strong and Forcing.
5. A 2-level opening bid showing a Three-suited hand and at least Average Strength.
6. Any 2-level or higher opening bid that is Strong.
7. Any 2-level opening bid showing at least Average Strength with at least 5-4 shape and both suits known.
8. Any Weak Natural opening at the 2-level showing at least 3 HCP and has a range not greater than 8 HCP.
9. A NT opening bid at the 2-level or higher showing at least 5-4 distribution in the minors.
10. Any Weak Natural opening at the 3-level or higher.
11. A 3NT opening bid showing a known or unknown solid suit.
12. A 3NT opening bid showing a known or unknown long minor suit.
13. A 4-level opening bid showing length in a different known suit.

Responses and Rebids

1. Any Natural response.
2. Any game forcing response.
3. An Artificial 1D response to any 1C opening bid.

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4. Any Artificial response to a Strong or Very Strong opening bid.
5. Any 1NT response to an opening bid of 1H or 1S.
6. Any response to a NT opening bid.
7. An Artificial jump response showing a raise (of any strength) of opener's Natural opening bid.
8. An Artificial jump response that shows at least 5 cards in a known suit and at least 4 cards in another known suit.
9. An Artificial response of 2C and/or 2D by a passed hand that shows a raise of opener's Natural opening bid.
10. Any response to a 2-level or higher opening bid.

Overcalls and Competitive Bids

1. All Natural overcalls.
2. All doubles and redoubles, and responses to those calls.
3. All calls in balancing seat.
4. All Artificial cuebids (by either pair), except a cuebid that could be Weak must show at least one known suit. All responses to a cuebid are allowed.
5. A suit overcall showing at least 5-4 distribution in two known suits. If the overcall is not a jump, then it must show at least Average Strength.
6. An Artificial NT overcall at any level for a 2-suited takeout. A 1NT bid in this category must show at least Near-Average Strength. Below the 4-level at least one suit must be known.
7. An artificial NT overcall at any level for 3-suited takeout. A 1NT bid in this category must show at least Near-Average Strength.
8. Artificial advances of a natural 1NT overcall.
9. After an opponent's Natural NT opening bid or overcall:
 - a. An Artificial 2C bid having any meaning
 - b. An Artificial 2D bid showing a one-suited hand in hearts or spades
 - c. Any other call showing a known suit of at least 4 cards
10. In response to partner's overcall showing an unknown suit, any call asking for partner's longest suit (e.g., "pass or correct" calls).

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11. Any artificial defense to a Strong or Very Strong opening bid.
12. After an opening bid and an overcall, any call (by either side) showing length in a known suit.
13. After an opening bid and an overcall, a bid of spades to show any of:
 - a. A desire to play No Trump
 - b. Both minors
 - c. Either a desire to play No Trump or both minors

Beginning with the Opening Bidder's second call, all calls are allowed by both pairs.

Lead and Carding Agreements

<Same as Red Chart>

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White Chart

Bidding agreements are disallowed unless they are specifically allowed.

Allowed Bidding Agreements

Opening Bids

1. Any opening bid in a suit that is Natural, as long as it shows at least Near-Average Strength.
2. A 1C or 1D opening bid that is either Natural or Quasi-Natural, as long as it shows at least Average Strength.
3. An Artificial 1C opening bid that is Strong and Forcing.
4. A Natural NT opening bid, as long as it shows at least 10 HCP and the range is not greater than 5 HCP.
5. An Artificial 2C or 2D opening bid that is Strong.
6. A 2D opening showing 0-1 diamonds along with 3+ cards in all other suits, as long as it shows at least Average Strength.
7. A 2D opening showing a 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 pattern, as long as it shows at least Average Strength. The short suit may be known or unknown.
8. A 2-level opening bid showing Average Strength with at least 5-4 shape with both suits known.
9. Any Weak Natural opening at the 2-level showing at least 4 HCP and has a range not greater than 7 HCP.
10. Any Weak Natural opening at the 3-level or higher showing 6 or more cards in the suit.
11. A 3NT opening bid that shows a long minor suit (the suit may be solid or broken).
12. An Artificial 4C opening showing hearts, and an Artificial 4D opening showing spades.

Responses and Rebids

1. Any Natural response.
2. Any game forcing response.

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3. An Artificial 1D response to any 1C opening bid.
4. Any Artificial negative response to a Strong or Very Strong opening bid.
5. A Forcing 1NT response to an opening bid of 1H or 1S. 1NT cannot guarantee an invitational or stronger hand.
6. Any response to a NT opening bid.
7. An Artificial jump response showing a raise (of any strength) of opener's Natural opening bid.
8. An Artificial response of 2C and/or 2D by a passed hand showing a raise of opener's Natural opening bid.
9. Any response to a 2-level or higher opening bid.
10. All calls starting with opener's second bid (this applies to both pairs).

Overcalls and Competitive Bids

1. All Natural overcalls.
2. All doubles and redoubles, and responses to those calls.
3. All Artificial cuebids (by either pair), except a cuebid that could be Weak must show at least one known suit. All responses to a cuebid are allowed.
4. A 2NT overcall showing at least 5-4 distribution in the minors or in the two lowest unbid suits.
5. Artificial advances of a natural 1NT overcall.
6. After an opponent's Natural NT opening bid or overcall:
 - a. An Artificial 2C bid having any meaning
 - b. An Artificial bid showing two known suits with 4-4 length or better
 - c. An Artificial bid showing a known 5+ card suit
 - d. A Natural bid showing 4+ cards in the suit bid and another known or unknown suit of 4+ cards.
7. In response to partner's overcall showing an unknown suit, any call asking for partner's longest suit (e.g., "pass or correct" calls).
8. An Artificial NT overcall at any level for a 2-suited or 3-suited takeout. A 1NT bid in this category must show at least Near-Average Strength.

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9. Artificial defenses to Strong and Very Strong opening bids.

Lead and Carding Agreements

1. Right-side up or upside down carding to show attitude, count, or suit preference is allowed.
2. A dual message signal, such as odd-even, is allowed only on the first discard.
3. Any lead system is allowed (but leading low from a small doubleton must be pre-alerted).

Examples

Definitions

1. Natural: A 2H opening showing hearts and a minor is Natural if 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” 1D that could contain a singleton diamond below a queen is not Quasi-Natural.
3. Rule of N: A hand with 11 High Card Points and 5-4-3-1 distribution would meet the “Rule of 20” or lower, but not the “Rule of 21” or some greater number of “N”.
4. Range: “15-17” is a range of three points . “10-12 or 15-17” is a range of 8 points .
5. Purely Destructive Initial Action: 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.
6. Encrypted Signal: It is an encrypted signal for the defender with the lowest remaining spot card to switch from standard to upside down carding when declarer shows out of a suit. It is an encrypted signal if after an auction where declarer shows an exact length in a suit, the defender with more cards in the suit plays standard and the defender with fewer cards plays upside down.
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 and the defender with the ace to give a different signal. It is 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. It is not an encrypted signal to change ordering during the hand in a predetermined way, for example by playing standard carding at trick one and upside down carding after trick one.

Red Chart Examples

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.

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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 openers could be much weaker than 15 HCPs, provided they could not be 4-4-4-1.

Openings

1. [Restriction 1] 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 five boards. Transfer openings at the 1 level must show at least average strength regardless of the length of the segment.
3. [Restriction 5] Hands with 9 or fewer HCPs cannot be upgraded into any NT range.
4. [Restriction 6] 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
5. [Restrictions 8-10] A Multi 2D 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. [Restrictions 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. [Restriction 9] Opening 2NT to show a major-minor 2-suited hand is not permitted.
8. [Restriction 12] Mini-Roman type openings must show at least 10 HCP or meet the Rule of 18. These openings require a minimum of 10 HCP if 4-4-4-1, and 9 HCP if 5-4-3-1 or 5-4-4-0.
9. [Restriction 13] A 2H opening bid showing spades and a lower 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. [Restriction 15] 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).

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Overcalls

1. [Restriction 1] Cue bids 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.