

VILLAGE CARD CLUB
Hot Springs Village, AR

Conventions and Treatments – Special Partnership Understandings

The *ACBL General Convention Chart* describes the partnership methods (i.e. conventions and treatments) permitted at the Village Card Club (VCC) games. Methods not specifically allowed are disallowed. The VCC does not disallow any bidding system that complies with the *ACBL General Convention Chart*. A copy of the *ACBL General Convention Chart* is posted in the club and the membership is encouraged to familiarize itself with it.

The *ACBL Limited Conventions Chart* applies to games with an upper limit of 20 masterpoints. A copy of this chart is also posted in the club.

To assist in the education of the membership regarding the use of conventions, treatments or special partnership understandings, the following Laws are applicable:

The ACBL Alert Procedure and Law 40 B. – Concealed Partnership Understandings Prohibited:

A player may not make a call or play based on a special partnership understanding unless an opposing pair may reasonably be expected to understand its meaning or unless his side discloses the use of such a call or play in accordance with the regulations of the sponsoring organization.

Law 75 A. – Special Partnership Agreements:

Special partnership agreements, whether explicit or implicit, must be fully and freely available to the opponents (see Law 40). Information conveyed to partner through such agreements must arise from the calls, plays and conditions of the current deal.

The Director may award an adjusted score for the violation of either Law 40 B. or Law 75 A.

The VCC requires that players alert calls that convey a special partnership understanding even if those calls are not specifically listed by the ACBL as requiring

an alert. The opponents are entitled to full disclosure. The purpose of an alert and full disclosure is to encourage sportsmanship among the members.

Special partnership understandings about specific bids are defined as having a different meaning than “standard” bidding. A “standard” bid is one that is widely known and commonly used. These standard bids, although not exclusively, appear on the convention card in black ink.

The VCC Board of Directors views the following methods to be “special partnership understandings” that require an alert. The list of methods is not exclusive and other special partnership understandings may be added to the list at a future date.

1. A reverse by opener that is *not* forcing for one round must be alerted when the reverse shows a combined holding of 23+ HCP. The responder must treat the reverse as non-forcing. In a competitive auction, if the responder has passed, a reverse by the opener after an opponent’s bid would show 17+ HCP. Opening in a six-card minor suit and reversing into a five-card major suit with at least 10 HCP is permitted by the *General Convention Chart*.
2. A 1NT response to a minor suit opening bid that shows less than 5 HCP and may contain a four-card major suit, or two four-card major suits, is prohibited unless the minor suit opening bid is alerted as forcing and denies a four-card major suit.
3. A bid generally considered to be forcing that is *not* forcing must be alerted. One example is a two-level or higher response to a one-level opening bid after an opponent has made a simple overcall. This treatment is referred to as a “negative free bid.”
4. The substitution of a non-alertable call as a call with a special meaning requires an alert and full disclosure. One example is the substitution of a “negative double” with a “card-showing double.”
5. The substitution of a commonly known alertable call (i.e. Jacoby 2NT) with an atypical alertable call requires a *pre-alert* and full disclosure.

The game director or the club manager should be consulted about any questionable method prior to its usage in club games. Whenever a doubt exists regarding any method employed by a partnership, it is best to obtain an opinion from a director or the club manager prior to its use during a game.

The Board of Directors understands that some players who employ special partnership understandings are unaware of the Laws that govern their usage.

Therefore, an educational focus rather than an enforcement focus will be in effect for a period of thirty days from the date this policy is promulgated to the VCC membership. The grace period for enforcement is to provide a sufficient time for the membership to familiarize itself with the new guidelines and to obtain an opinion from a director or the club manager regarding the legality of any special method.

Please be advised that the grace period for the enforcement of this VCC policy extends to procedural penalties only. During the grace period, a director may award an adjusted score if an illegal method is used by a partnership. An illegal method is one that is explicitly or implicitly disallowed by the *ACBL General Convention Chart*. If the director or the club manager determines that a method is illegal, it may no longer be used during the thirty-day grace period.

The majority of violations, if any, will emanate from the failure to alert a special method. In essence, the special method is legal provided that an alert is provided the opponents. The experience and knowledge level of the partnership involved will be considered prior to the imposition of a penalty. Life Masters, for example, are held to a higher standard than non-Life Masters when a director rules on a violation of the alert procedure. The failure to alert constitutes misinformation under Law 21 and potentially may result in an adjusted score.

Lastly, as a reminder to the membership, the VCC has a Standing Rule regarding the use of a psychic bid. A “psych” is defined as a deliberate and gross misstatement of honor strength or suit length. A psychic bid may be made only once per calendar day. However, psychic bids used against lower strata opponents are prohibited.

A psychic bid is not a systemic deviation. A systemic deviation is a bid within a Queen of the announced strength of the hand or within one card of the announced length in a suit bid. For example, a player may infrequently open 1♠ with four spades and 10 HCP when the partnership agreement is five-card majors and 12 HCP. However, frequent systemic deviations may indicate that a partnership has an undisclosed implied agreement acquired through experience as a partnership. This indication is a serious problem that requires firm disciplinary action.

February 9, 2007