

# NZ BRIDGE SYSTEMS POLICY

(Effective 1 April 2009)

## INTRODUCTION

The NZ Bridge Systems Policy seeks to provide guidelines rather than an exhaustive list of permitted conventions. Players and Directors are expected to observe the spirit of these guidelines in considering conventions or treatments not specifically mentioned. In the event of a dispute, the Director's interpretation is final and may subsequently be referred to the Chief Director for ratification or resolution by the appropriate committee of the Board of NZ Bridge.

It is important to understand that the Policy covers partnership agreements and that, to depart from a partnership agreement (a *psyche*), is not a violation of the Policy (but see page D35).

Unless otherwise specified by NZ Bridge, the following are allowable systems or conventions for each Tournament grade.

### 3B Point (Junior Tournaments)

*Green* systems – All

**Note:** Although the Multi 2♣ or Multi 2♦ (described in *Green* Systems below) is a *Green* system convention, it is **NOT PERMITTED IN JUNIOR TOURNAMENTS**.

*Blue* systems – Those basically natural systems (i.e. without relays or many artificial bids)

*Note 1:* The following Precision opening bids and standard responses are allowed:

- 1♣ (with 1♦ response);
- 1♦ (with no limits on diamond length);
- 2♣ (with 2♦ one-round forcing response).

*Note 2:* A 2NT opening must show a strong hand with no singleton or void.

A 2♦ opening must show 5+ diamonds.

***The two preceding Notes apply only to Blue systems.***

### 5B Point (Intermediate) and 8B Point (Open/Restricted Tournaments)

*Green* systems – All

*Blue* systems – All

*Red* systems – Limited to those that exclude:

- An opening suit bid at the 1 level that does not show, in the bid suit, at least 2 cards if clubs, at least 3 cards if diamonds and at least 4 cards if hearts or spades;
- A 1NT opening bid that does not show a balanced hand, or that has a minimum HCP count of less than 11;
- Transfer opening bids below the level of 2NT;
- *Brown Sticker* conventions;

- Any opening bid of 2♣ to 3♠ that may be weak and does not promise at least 4 cards in a known suit. The sole exception is an opening bid of 2♣ or 2♦ that may show a weak hand with 6 cards in either major only, or as an option among any number of strong hand types.
- Relay-based systems;

### A Point (Open Tournaments)

“**Pairs style**” – Less than eight boards are played in succession against the same pair.

*Green systems* – All

*Blue systems* – All

*Red systems* – Limited to those that exclude:

- An opening bid of one of a major that does not show at least 4 cards in a specified suit;
- *Brown sticker* conventions.

**EXCEPTION:** These limitations do not apply to the Final or Semi-final (if applicable) of A Point Pairs Tournaments run with a qualification stage.

“**Teams style**” – Eight boards or more are played in succession against the same pair.

This category will include nearly all Teams Tournaments and some Swiss Pairs Tournaments, the deciding factor being the number of boards being played in each match/round.

*Green systems* – All

*Blue systems* – All

*Red systems* – All

*Yellow systems* – All

“**National Rubber Bridge Competition**” (refer to page D11).

### Exceptions

Specific exception to the NZ Bridge Systems Policy may be made. If the Tournament Organiser (be it a Club or Regional Committee) wishes to apply to NZ Bridge for such an exception for a Tournament it is planning, then an application should be made through the Secretary, giving reasons and an appropriate amount of time for consideration to be given to the application before the Tournament Notice needs to be sent out.

## CLASSIFICATION OF SYSTEMS

### Definitions

Average Hand	A hand containing 10 HCP with no distributional values.
Weak	High-card strength below that of an average hand.
Strong	High-card strength a King or greater than that of an average hand (i.e. 13+ HCP).
Natural	A call or play that is not a convention.
Length	3 cards or more.
Shortage	2 cards or less.
Convention	A call that, by partnership agreement, conveys a meaning other than a willingness to play in the denomination named (or in the last denomination named), or high-card strength or length (3 cards or more) there. However, an agreement as to overall strength does not make the call a convention.

### Random Actions

It is forbidden to open or overcall hands that, by agreement, may contain fewer than 8 HCP and for which no further definition is provided (i.e. bids that promise nothing more than 13 cards in a player's hand). However, pairs employing Highly Unusual Methods may open hands at the 1 level that conform to the definition for *Yellow* Systems described below.

### Encrypted Signals

Additional to the restrictions on bidding methods and conventions set out in these regulations, players may not use signalling methods by which the message or messages conveyed by the signals are hidden from the declarer because of some key available only to the defenders (i.e. encrypted signals are not allowed).

### **Green Systems** – All Natural Systems

The following conventions/treatments are specifically allowed. However, this is not an exhaustive list and, if a question regarding a convention not specifically covered is raised, then analogy may be made to the type of conventions/treatments allowed for:

- General:
  - Gerber or Blackwood, including modified forms;
  - Negative doubles, including modified forms;
  - Any defence to an opponent's 1NT opening;
  - Immediate cue bid of opener's suit as:
    - Natural or
    - Any strong hand.
- Openings:
  - An opening suit bid at the 1 level that promises, in the bid suit, at least 2 cards if clubs, at least 3 cards if diamonds and at least 4 cards if a major;
  - A 1NT opening must be more than 10 HCP and balanced;
  - A 2NT opening bid must be more than 17 HCP and balanced;
  - The bid of a suit at the 2 level that is strong and promises at least 5 cards in the bid suit and at least 4 cards in another suit.

- Any other 2-level bid by partnership agreement must show a single-suited hand (at least 6 cards) in a known suit; except:
  - Any 2♣ or 2♦ opening that shows a strong hand and is forcing for at least one round of bidding; and except:
  - Any 2♣ or 2♦ opening that may show a weak hand in either major (6 cards) only or as an option among any number of strong hand types.
- A gambling 3NT opening.
- Responses to NT openings or overcalls:
  - Baron or Stayman, including modified forms; and
  - Transfer responses.
- Immediate cue bids:
  - Michael's style showing a 2-suited hand (5+/5+) with at least one suit specified, either weak or strong – but not both;
  - If the immediate cue bid is unlimited, the convention is *Red*.

### **Blue Systems** – Strong Club Systems

These systems are characterised by a strong artificial 1♣ or 1♦ opening (16+ HCP). Alongside this may sit any conventions/treatments categorised as *Green*.

In addition, the following are allowed:

- A 1♦ negative to the strong 1♣ opening;
- An opening of 1♦ or 2♦ that together provide a “catch-all” and may be as short as a void.

### **Red Systems** – Artificial Systems

This category includes all systems that do not fall under the definition of *Green*, *Blue* or *Yellow* systems. This category also includes any otherwise *Green* or *Blue* system that contains a *Brown Sticker* convention.

### **Yellow Systems** – Highly Unusual Methods (HUMs)

A system that exhibits one or more of the following features, as a matter of partnership agreement:

1. A pass in the opening position that shows at least the values generally accepted for an opening bid of one, even if there are alternative weak possibilities.
2. An opening suit bid at the 1 level that may be weaker than a pass.
3. An opening bid at the 1 level that may be made with values a King or more below average strength (0–7 HCP) and insufficient compensating distributional values.
4. An opening bid of one of a major with alternative possible meanings that the hand may be long or short in a specified suit (i.e. the use of “wonder” bids).
5. An opening bid of one of a major with alternative possibilities that show length in one specified suit or length in another specified suit (i.e. the use of multi-

meaning bids that do not guarantee an “anchor” suit). **EXCEPTION:** one of a minor in a strong club or strong diamond system.

### **Defences against *Yellow* systems**

In Open Teams Tournaments, unless otherwise specified in the supplementary regulations for the event:

- (1) A team using a *Yellow* system must make two copies of their fully completed system card available to the Director prior to the start of the event, along with a suggested defence to the HUM components of their system for their opponents to use.
- (2) A pair opposing a pair using a HUM is allowed to prepare its own notes detailing a defence to the *Yellow* system (not exceeding one A4 sheet). A copy of these notes must be given to the opponents and is considered to be part of the HUM pair’s system card; therefore, it may be consulted by the pair at the table during the auction period and during the play period only for the purpose of responding to a question from the pair using the HUM.

### **Loss of seating rights**

In Open Teams Tournaments, whenever a team with one or more pairs using a *Yellow* system opposes a team that has no such pair, the HUM team loses any seating rights and lines up first throughout.

### **“*Brown Sticker*” Conventions**

The following conventions or treatments are categorised as “*Brown Sticker*”.

1. Any opening bid of 2♣ through to 3♠ that
  - (i) could be weak (may, by agreement, be made with values below average strength) AND
  - (ii) does not promise at least 4 cards in a known suit.

**EXCEPTION:** When all the weak options guarantee at least 4 cards in one known suit and only the strong options do not.

**EXCEPTION:** A 2-level opening in a minor that may show a weak hand in either major (6 cards) only or as an option among any number of strong hand types.

2. An overcall of a natural opening bid of one of a suit that does not promise at least 4 cards in a known suit.

**EXCEPTION:** A natural overcall in no trumps.

**EXCEPTION:** Any cue bid suit that shows a strong hand.

**EXCEPTION:** A jump cue bid in opponent’s known suit that asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in that suit.

3. Any “weak” 2-suited bids at the 2 or 3 level that may, by agreement, be made with 3 cards or fewer in one of the suits.
4. None of the foregoing restrictions pertain to conventional defences against strong, artificial opening bids or defences against *Brown Sticker* or HUM conventions.

### **Defences against *Brown Sticker* conventions**

A pair may prepare a written defence (not exceeding one A4 sheet) against the *Brown Sticker* elements only of any system. Two copies of these notes should be given to the opponents and are considered to be part of the opponents' system card; therefore these notes may be consulted by the pair at the table during the auction period and during the play period only for the purposes of responding to a question from the pair using a *Brown Sticker* convention.

### **NON-COMPLIANCE WITH SYSTEM REGULATIONS**

When it is brought to the Director's attention that a pair have transgressed the system regulations, whether in the system played or the convention(s) used, the Director should consider whether the opponents have been damaged and, if so, whether to award an adjusted score(s).

When damage has been proved, and the Director decides that awarding an adjusted score is justified, it is suggested that the adjustment should be 60%/40% as per Law 12C2.

In addition, the Director may assess a disciplinary penalty, taking into account the following:

- Whether non-offenders have been damaged.
- The standard of the offending pair.
- The standard of the field, especially pairs that have been affected.
- Was it reasonable for the offenders to have been aware that they were transgressing the system regulations.
- Did they take steps to check any doubtful points with the Director prior to the event; or with NZ Bridge.

This list is not exhaustive. If desired, it would be appropriate for a Director to consult with a National Director.