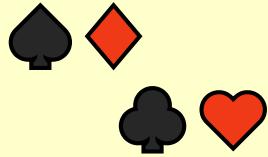


Bridge on Sundays



Deviating from the System

A frequent comment made by the less experienced, and sometimes by the very experienced, is that a player has opened the bidding outside the agreed points range! Is this permitted? Penny Hassell has kindly provided us with a reply to such a query.

You may bid whatever you like, whenever you like, regardless of your holding!

Of course, your partner has no way of knowing what you hold and therefore as a pair you are unlikely to reach the best contract for your side – that is why we have a bidding system.

Opponents are entitled to know which bidding system we use and thus what our bids mean.

Not everyone uses exactly the same system – we teach the one most commonly in use in England, the one promoted by the English Bridge Union.

As an example, we use an opening 1NT to mean a balanced 12-14hcp. Some systems use this range non-vulnerable but 15-17 vulnerable. Others 15-17 at all times, some 16-19 at all times and so on.

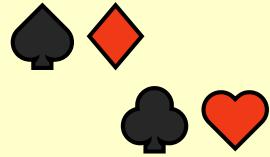
If you announce an opening 1NT as 12-14 hcp but ignore the system and actually have 15 hcp you have misled your opponents. You have, however, also misled your partner who thinks you have a maximum of 14hcp who, with a balanced 10hcp, will pass when you could have reached a game contract of 3NT had you stuck to the system – tough luck!

If you announce 1NT as 12-14 hcp but **frequently** have 15hcp, then your partner will know that you may have 15hcp and adjust their bidding accordingly. Thus you are misleading your opponents which is illegal.

If you use your judgment and go outside the agreed points range once or twice per 4 sessions, that is acceptable; more frequently, then you need to state a wider points range.

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Deviating from the System

The commonest opening bid is 1NT and if you read *Hand evaluation and re-evaluation* you would see that some 11 pt hands should be opened 1NT and likewise some poor 15 pt hands. Your partner must respond as if you had opened in the prescribed range.

Another example where judgement can be used:

You pick up ♣AKJ986 ♦K652 ♥84 ♠10. First or second in hand you would open 1♣, but 3rd place some players would open 3♣. You hold only 3 cards in the majors and partner has passed. Even though your pre-emptive range at the 3 level is 5-9 pts, you want to make it difficult for the 4th player.