

# Acol Bidding & Leads

These notes describe the modern ACOL system as interpreted in the book *The Right Way to Play Bridge* by Paul Mendelson.

## Point count

- High card points (HCP): Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1
- Long suit points: Count 1 additional point for every card over 4 in a suit
- When supporting partner's suit with an 8 card fit, add 1pt for doubleton, 3 for a singleton, 5 for a void
- When partner supports your suit add 1pt for a doubleton, 2 for a singleton, 3 for a void (as long as it is not in a suit bid by partner)

## Partnership targets

20-22pts	1 level	7 tricks	
23-24pts	2 level	8 tricks	
25-26pts	3 level	9 tricks	game in NT
27-28pts	4 level	10 tricks	game in Majors (H, S)
29-32pts	5 level	11 tricks	game in Minors (C, D)
33-35pts	6 level	12 tricks	Small Slam
36+ pts	7 level	13 tricks	Grand Slam

Your targets on every hand are:

- 1st An 8 card fit (or better) in a major suit
- 2nd A NT contract
- 3rd A Minor Suit contract

With a "mis-fit" (no more than a 7 card fit) consider deliberately bidding to 1 level below those shown above.

## BALANCED HANDS

- Definition: A maximum of 8 cards in the 2 longest suits (exception is 4441 distribution)
- Opener should bid NT within the first 2 rounds
- Recommended not to open 1NT with a good 5 card major suit
  
- 12-14 pts Open 1NT
- 15-16 pts Open a suit & rebid NT at lowest available level
- 17-18 pts Open a suit & rebid NT jumping a level
- 19-20 pts Open a suit & rebid 3NT
- *In each of the above with 4 card support for partner's Major suit, support this suit rather than a NT rebid.*
- 20-22 pts Open 2NT
- 23+ pts Open 2C

## Recommendations with 4441 distribution

- 12 – 13 pts Pass
- 14+ pts 1H with 4 hearts, or a minor, never 1S

## Responding to a 1NT opening

No bid	0-10 pts	Balanced hand
2C	0+ pts	Stayman convention (asking for 4 card majors)
2D, 2H, 2S	0-9 pts	Weak take out, 5 card suit, opener will pass
2NT	11-12 pts	Balanced, opener will pass with minimum or raise to 3NT with maximum
3C, 3D	16+ pts	Slam interest, 5 card suit, very distributional hand

3H, 3S	12+ pts	5 card suit, opener will raise to 4 with 3 card support, or 3NT with 2
3NT	13-15 pts	Balanced (can have less points with long Minor suit)
4H, 4S	12+ pts	6+ card suit
4NT	19-20 pts	Balanced, opener will pass with minimum or raise to 6NT with maximum
5NT	23-24 pts	Balanced, opener will bid 6NT with minimum or raise to 7NT with maximum
6NT	21-22 pts	Balanced, opener will pass

## DISTRIBUTIONAL HANDS

Definition: 9 or more cards between the 2 longest suits

### Opening bid 1 of a suit

- 12+ HCP (or 10-11 HCP with a 6 card suit)
- With 2 or 3 four card suits open 1H (or a minor suit without a 4 card heart suit)
- With 2 minor 4 card suits open the weaker (to discourage a lead in that suit against a NT contract)
- Bid a long suit before a strong suit
- With two 5 or 6 card suits open the higher (unless clubs and spades)
- Opening 1 suit & re-bidding another infers at least 5 of the first & 4 of the second (due to not rebidding NT within the first 2 rounds to show a balanced hand)

### Responses to Opening 1 of suit

- Change of suit at the 1 level: 4 card suit, 6+ pts (1 round force unless responder has previously passed)
- Change of suit at the 2 level: 4 card suit (5 card suit if 1S → 2H), 8+ pts (1 round force unless responder has previously passed)
- 1NT 6-9 pts No 4 card major, except possibly after 1S opening
- 2NT 10-12 pts No 4 card major, except possibly after 1S opening
- 3NT 13-15 pts *Pudding raise* – 4 card support for opener's suit & a balanced hand
- Single raise (e.g. 1H → 2H) 6-9 pts and 4 card support
- Double raise (e.g. 1H → 3H) 10-12 pts and 4 card support, or longer
- Triple raise (e.g. 1H → 4H) fewer than 10 pts, excellent support & distribution
- With 16+ pts, consider a jump shift in a different suit

## Opener's Rebids

### Limit raises of partner's suit

Always support partner's 4 card Major.

After a 1 level response (6+ pts & 4 card suit):

- Simple raise (e.g. 1C → 1S → 2S): 12-15 pts
- Double raise (e.g. 1C → 1S → 3S): 16-18 pts
- Jump to game (e.g. 1C → 1S → 4S): 19-20 pts

After a 2 level response (8+ pts & 4 card suit, or 5 card suit if 1S → 2H):

- Simple raise (e.g. 1S → 2H → 3H): 12-16 pts
- Jump to game (e.g. 1S → 2H → 4H): 17-20 pts

### Opener's rebids with a weak hand

- Rebid a 5 card at the lowest level
- Rebid a new suit at the lowest level (guarantees 5+ cards in first suit & 4+ in second)

## Opener's rebids with a stronger hand

- Jump rebid with a good suit
- Jump in a new suit with 17+ pts and two 5 card suits (game forcing)
- "Reverse" in a new suit with 16+ pts (A reverse is a bid at the 2 level in a suit which is higher ranking than the first suit bid. It forces partner to go to the 3 level if he wants to show preference for the first suit (e.g. 1H → 2C → 2S or 1D → 1S → 2H). it shows more cards in the first suit than the second and is forcing for 1 round.

## Responder's Second Bids

- With a minimum for your initial response show preference for one of opener's suits - always return to the first suit, unless you have 2 more cards in the second suit than in the first.
- Support partner's suit:  
Raise to 2 level with 6-9 pts  
Raise to 3 level with 10-12 pts  
Raise to game with 13+ pts
- After a reverse show preference with 6-8 pts & raise to game with a good 9+ pts
- Bid NT's  
1NT with 6-9 pts  
2NT with 10-12 pts  
3NT with 13-15 pts  
After a reverse, bid 3NT on 10+ pts
- Rebid your suit to show a 6 carder (jump with 11+ pts)
- Bid the 4th suit (the 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing convention – ignore for the moment!)

## OTHER OPENING BIDS

### 2C Opening Bid

A balanced hand with 23+ pts or a distributional hand with 10+ playing tricks (it doesn't show a club suit). Forcing to game, except after the sequence 2C → 2D → 2NT

#### Responses

- 2D No high quality 5 card suit (it doesn't show a diamond suit)
- 2H, 2S, 3C, 3D 5 card suit with 2 of the top 3 honours

#### Opener's rebids

- 2NT 23-24pts balanced
- Bid a suit to show a distributional hand with 10+ playing tricks

#### Responder's rebids after 2C → 2D → 2H/2S

- With no Ace or King & no more than 1 Queen, bid 2NT
- Bid a 5 card major
- Raise partner's suit
- After opener's 2NT you can bid 3C (Stayman convention, asking for 4 card Majors)

### Strong 2 Opening Bids (2D, 2H, 2S)

A quality 6+ card suit with 8 to 9 ½ playing tricks

#### Responses

- Pass with less than 1 trick in your hand
- 2NT with 1 to 2 tricks in your hand (if partner is minimum he will rebid 3 of his suit)
- Single raise (e.g. 2H → 3H): 3 card support or a doubleton honour and at least one Ace or Void
- Double raise (e.g. 2H → 4H): 3 card support or a doubleton honour and no Ace or Void

- With no support for partner's suit, you can bid your own good quality 5+ card suit with at least 2 tricks in your hand.
- Opposite a 2D opener bid 3NT with 2 card support for diamonds and a scattering of values in other suits.

## 2NT Opening Bid

A balanced hand with a good 20-22 pts

Responses

- 3NT                   Balanced (or a long minor suit) with 5-10 pts
- 3C                   Stayman convention (asking for 4 card majors)
- 3D                   A slam try
- 3H, 3S             5 card suit, game forcing
- 4H, 4S             6 card suit or longer

## Pre-emptive opening bids (3C, 3D, 3H, 3S)

Good 7 card suit and less than 10 HCP – designed to obstruct the opposition's bidding

Responses

- Raise to game with 4 "quick tricks" (A = 1QT, KQ = 1, AK = 2, KQJ = 2, etc. (A, K or Q in partner's suit is usually worth a QT too).
- Bid 3NT with a strong hand and a good fit with partner's suit
- Bid a new suit with a good suit that is a genuine alternative to partner's (game forcing)
- Otherwise pass

## COMPETITIVE BIDDING

What to bid when opponents have already opened the bidding:

### Simple overcall of a suit at the lowest level

- At the 1 level A good 5 card suit with 8 to ~15 pts
- At the 2 level A good 5 card suit with 12 to ~16 pts (or 10/11 pts with 6 card suit)

Partner's responses are:

- Support (or raise) the suit with 3 to an honour
- Bid a new suit at the same level with a good 5/6 carder
- Cue bid opponent's suit to ask partner to clarify hand

### A Jump overcall of a suit at 1 level higher than necessary

- At the 2 level A good 6 card suit with 11 - 15 pts
- At the 3 level A good 6 card suit with 12 - 16 pts

Partner should "support or shut up".

### Pre-emptive overcall of a suit at 2 levels higher than necessary

- A 7+ card suit with less than 10 pts

### 1NT overcall

- 16 – 18 pts, balanced with 2 stoppers in opponent's suit

### Double

12+ pts (or 9-11 with 'distribution' if previously passed) and a shortage in one of opponents' suits. If opponents have bid 1 suit: at least 3 cards in all unbid suits.

If opponents have bid 2 suits: at least 4 cards in all unbid suits.

Partner must respond unless:

- He has a strong hand with length & strength in opponent's suit, or
- Right hand opponent bids

### THE BLACKWOOD CONVENTION

Except when it is a direct raise from 1NT or 2NT, a bid of 4NT is asking partner how many aces he holds and is used when investigating the possibility of a small or grand slam. Responses are:

- 5C with 0 or 4 aces
- 5D with 1 ace
- 5H with 2 aces
- 5S with 3 aces

A subsequent bid of 5NT is asking for kings on the same basis.

### THE STAYMAN CONVENTION

After an opening bid of 1NT a bid of 2C is asking opener to show any 4 card major suits. Ditto 3C after 2NT. When using Stayman always consider the need to make a sensible rebid (or pass) if opener has no 4 card major. With a balanced hand you need 11+ pts to use. With longer major suits Stayman can be used with a very weak point count with a view to signing off in 2 of a major. Opener's responses are:

- 2D with no 4 card major
- 2H with 4 hearts (& possibly 4 spades as well)
- 2S with 4 spades

If responder has a genuine club suit he will sign off in 3C

### LEADS AGAINST SUIT CONTRACTS

- Top of a sequence of 2 (if 10 or above), e.g. **Q**Jx
- A suit that partner has bid
- A low card to show interest in a suit (if you have an honour), e.g. K85**2**
- A higher card to show no interest in a suit (if you have no honour), e.g. 9**7**32
- Don't lead away from an Ace
- Don't lead a doubleton unless partner has bid the suit & obviously holds a lot of points
- Lead trumps if all other leads look unattractive

### LEADS AGAINST NO TRUMPS CONTRACTS

- A high card from a poor holding, usually 2<sup>nd</sup> highest, e.g. 9**8**75
- 4th highest card of longest suit (unless a weak hand with no entries), e.g. Q98**5**3
- Top of a sequence of 3 significant cards. There are 4 types of sequence
  - 1) Complete sequence, e.g. **Q**J10x
  - 2) Broken sequence, e.g. **J**108x
  - 3) Internal sequence, e.g. A**J**109
  - 4) Internal broken sequence, e.g. Q**10**97So when partner leads (say) **J**, he also promises 109 or 108 and possibly a higher honour (A or K, but not Q)