

# **ACBL CONVENTION CHARTS**

At any ACBL Tournament it is the responsibility of the participants to know which convention card is in force for the event in which they are playing. The ACBL has four such charts: Limited, General, Mid & Superchart. Most events use the General Convention Chart but the Mid-chart is gaining in popularity. The tournament sponsor determines which chart to use.

Each chart is a list of conventions which are allowed to be used in the event. Use of an unauthorized convention might require a score adjustment. Unless the convention is specifically included in the chart, it is not allowed for the particular event.

## **1. LIMITED CONVENTION CHART**

May be used in games with an upper limit of 20 or fewer MPs. Club management shall determine the conventions permitted in club games with an upper limit of 20 or fewer masterpoints. The sponsoring organization of local and higher rated tournaments may determine the conventions permitted in games with an upper limit of 20 or fewer masterpoints

## **2. GENERAL CONVENTION CHART**

The conventions listed below must be allowed in all ACBL-sanctioned tournament play (other than in events with an upper restriction of 20 or fewer masterpoints and events for which the ACBL conditions of contest state otherwise) and at club-level events with multiple-site overall masterpoint awards. However, clubs have full authority to regulate conventions in games conducted solely at their clubs.

## **3. MID-CHART**

This chart applies to:

1. All NABC+ events with no upper masterpoint restrictions played at an NABC.
2. All unrestricted Flight A regionally rated events at an NABC (top two players) of less than 1000 points.

A method may be approved experimentally for Mid-Chart events. In order to have a method approved experimentally, a complete description and suggested defense must be submitted to ACBL, attention Chief Tournament Director by regular mail or e-mail to [chief.tournament.director@acbl.org](mailto:chief.tournament.director@acbl.org).

## **4. SUPER CHART**

This chart applies to all NABC+ events with no upper masterpoint limit played at an NABC in which contestants play segments (no change of opponents) of 12 or more boards. This chart (or any part) may be used at a sectionally or regionally rated event or tournament at sponsor's option in any event with 12-board or longer segments provided this has been included in tournament advertising.

For NABC+ events in which this chart is permitted, pairs playing SuperChart methods must furnish the above descriptions of their methods to the Director-in-Charge of the event the day prior to the session in which they choose to play them.

Pre-Alerts are required for all conventional methods not permitted on the ACBL General Convention Chart. Description of, and suggested defenses to, such methods must be made in writing. A defense to a method which requires the above pre-Alert may be referred to during the auction by opponents of the convention user.

Any bracket of a bracketed KO at an NABC which contains no team with a bracket designator (average masterpoints of the entire team or sectionally or regionally rated event or tournament at sponsor's option provided that this has been included in tournament advertising. (The requirement for advertising does not extend to use in Flt. A or high brackets of KOs.)

Pre-Alerts are required for all conventional methods not permitted on the ACBL General Convention Chart **except for those methods designated by an asterisk (\*) which do not require a written suggested defense.** A written description of, and suggested defenses to such methods must be made available to opponents. A defense to a method which requires the above pre-Alert may be referred to during the auction by opponents of the convention user.

## **1. ACBL Limited Conventions**

*(May be used in games with an upper limit of 20 or fewer MPs)*

### **CLUBS**

Club management shall determine the conventions permitted in club games with an upper limit of 20 or fewer masterpoints.

### **LOCAL & HIGHER EVENTS:**

The sponsoring organization of local and higher rated tournaments may determine the conventions permitted in games with an upper limit of 20 or fewer masterpoints.

### **OPENING BIDS:**

1. A 1♣ opening bid may be both artificial (says nothing about clubs) and forcing (partner must respond at least once), but opener must have at least 10 HCP. A negative 1♦ response may be used.
2. A 2♣ opening bid may be artificial and strong. It may be balanced (a hand stronger than a traditional 2NT opening) or unbalanced (a hand with which you would open a strong two-bid if playing that way). Further bidding will describe the hand.
3. A 3NT opening bid may show a hand with a long, solid suit (Gambling).

### **RESPONSES AND REBIDS:**

1. A jump shift of one or more levels (into a suit or into notrump) may be used either to force to game or to show a raise of partner's suit.
2. Any meaning may be given to the responses and rebids after an opening bid of 1NT. Exception: if the 1NT opening has a point range which exceeds 5 HCP, or if the 1NT

opening has an agreed lower limit of fewer than 10 HCP, responses and rebids may not be conventional — they must be natural.

3. Any meaning may be given to the responses to and rebids after an opening bid of 2♣ or higher. Exception: if the opening bid is a weak two-bid with:
  - a. an agreed point range of more than 7 HCP,
  - b. an agreement that the bid suit can contain fewer than five cards, or
  - c. an agreement that the hand can contain fewer than 5 HCPresponses and rebids may not be conventional - they must be natural.
4. Any call may be used to ask partner or to respond to partner about aces, kings, queens, singletons, voids or trump quality with the exceptions noted above.

### **COMPETITIVE AUCTIONS:**

1. Any meaning may be given to a double or a redouble.
2. A notrump overcall or jump overcall may be used to show a two-suited hand (at least 5-4 distribution in the two suits). At least one of the suits must be known. The second suit may be known or unknown.
3. Any meaning may be given to the cuebid of an opponent's suit.
4. Any meaning may be given to calls used to defend against opponents' conventional calls, notrump bids and opening bids of 2♣ or higher.

### **DISALLOWED**

1. Conventions and/or agreements with a primary purpose of destroying the opponents' methods are not allowed (e.g., a bid telling nothing about the bidder's hand, made simply to use up bidding space).
2. Agreements allowing the partnership to open the bidding at the one level with fewer than 8 HCP are not allowed. This does not preclude a psychic opening bid.
3. Psyching of artificial opening bids or conventional responses to artificial opening bids.
4. Psychic controls (bids designed to determine whether partner has psyched or to clarify the nature of the psych).
5. Relay systems (one player tells nothing about his own hand while interrogating partner about his hand through a series of conventional calls).

### **CARDING**

A discard (a card played while not following suit) can convey a message to partner. The message can pertain to the length of the suit of the card discarded, to the attitude toward that suit (desire to have partner lead that suit) or to another suit (no information about the suit of the card discarded). A pair may decide to attribute the attitude message (good-bad) to the cards on either a higher-to-lower basis (a higher card is more positive than a lower card) or a lower-to-higher basis (a low card is more positive than a higher card).

A discard may carry more than one message, but only at each defender's first discard of the deal. Dual-message discards are not permitted as second or subsequent discards. Encrypted signals (the order and /or message is based on information known to the other defender but not yet to declarer) are not allowed at any time.

## **2. ACBL General Convention Chart**

*The conventions listed below must be allowed in all ACBL sanctioned tournament play (other than in events with an upper restriction of 20 or fewer masterpoints and events for which the ACBL conditions of contest state otherwise) and at club-level events with multiple-site overall masterpoint awards. Clubs have full authority to regulate conventions in games conducted solely at their clubs.*

### **DEFINITIONS**

1. An opening suit bid or response is considered natural if in a minor it shows three or more cards in that suit and in a major it shows four or more cards in that suit. A notrump opening or overcall is natural if not unbalanced (generally, no singleton or void and only one or two doubletons).
2. An overcall in a suit is considered natural if, by agreement, it shows four or more cards in that suit.
3. A sequence of relay bids is defined as a system if, after an opening of one of a suit, it is started prior to opener's rebid.

### **ALLOWED**

*(Unless specifically allowed methods are disallowed)*

### **OPENING BIDS**

1. ONE CLUB OR ONE DIAMOND may be used as an all-purpose opening bid (artificial or natural) promising a minimum of 10 high-card points.
2. FORCING 1NT OPENING BID indicating a balanced or unbalanced hand and a minimum of 16 HCP.
3. TWO CLUBS ARTIFICIAL OPENING BID indicating one of:
  - a) a strong hand
  - b) a three-suiter with a minimum of 10 HCP
4. STRENGTH SHOWING OPENING AT THE TWO LEVEL OR HIGHER that asks for aces, kings, queens, singletons, voids or trump quality and responses thereto.
5. TWO DIAMOND ARTIFICIAL OPENING BID indicating one of:
  - a) both majors with a minimum of 10 HCP.
  - b) a strong hand.
  - c) a three-suiter with a minimum of 10 HCP.

6. OPENING BID AT THE TWO LEVEL OR HIGHER indicating two known suits, a minimum of 10 HCP and at least 5-4 distribution in the suits.
7. OPENING NOTRUMP BID AT THE TWO LEVEL OR HIGHER indicating at least 5-4 distribution in the minors.
8. OPENING THREE NOTRUMP BID indicating one of
  - a) a solid suit or
  - b) a minor one-suiter.
9. OPENING FOUR-LEVEL BID transferring to a known suit.

### **RESPONSES AND REBIDS**

1. ONE DIAMOND as a forcing, artificial response to 1♣.
2. ONE NOTRUMP response to a major suit opening bid forcing one round; cannot guarantee game invitational or better values.
3. CONVENTIONAL RESPONSES WHICH GUARANTEE GAME FORCING OR BETTER VALUES. May NOT be part of a relay system.
4. TWO CLUBS OR TWO DIAMONDS response to third or fourth-seat major-suit openings asking the quality of the opening bid.
5. SINGLE OR HIGHER JUMP SHIFTS AND/OR NOTRUMP BIDS AT THE TWO LEVEL OR HIGHER to indicate a raise or to force to game.
6. ARTIFICIAL AND OR CONVENTIONAL CALLS after strong (15+ HCP), forcing opening bids and after opening bids of 2 or higher. (For this classification, by partnership agreement, weak two-bids must be within a range of 7 HCP and the suit must contain at least five cards – (See #7 under *DISALLOWED* below)
7. ALL CONSTRUCTIVE CALLS starting with the opening bidder's second call.
8. CALLS THAT ASK for aces, kings queens, singletons, voids or trump quality and responses thereto.
9. ALL CALLS AFTER A NATURAL NOTRUMP opening bid or direct overcall, EXCEPT for natural notrump opening bids or overcalls with a lower limit of less than 10 HCP or with a range of greater than 5 HCP (including those that have two non-consecutive ranges). (See #7 under *DISALLOWED* below)

### **COMPETITIVE**

1. CONVENTIONAL BALANCING CALLS.
2. CONVENTIONAL DOUBLES AND REDOUBLES and responses (including free bids) thereto.
3. NOTRUMP OVERCALL for either
  - a) two-suit takeout showing at least 5-4 distribution and at least one known suit (At the four level or higher there is no requirement to have a known suit.) or
  - b) three-suit takeout ( at least three cards in each of the three suits.)
4. a) JUMP OVERCALLS INTO A SUIT to indicate at least 5-4 distribution in two known suits and responses thereto.

- b) SIMPLE OVERCALLS INTO A SUIT to indicate a minimum of 10 HCP, at least 5-4 distribution in two known suits and responses thereto.
- 5. CUEBID of an opponent's suit and responses thereto, except that a cuebid that could be weak (less than 10 HCP) directly over an opening bid, must show at least one known suit.
- 6. DEFENSE TO:
  - a) conventional calls (except see #9 *RESPONSES AND REBIDS* above and #7 under *DISALLOWED* below),
  - b) natural notrump opening bids and overcalls, except that direct calls, other than double and 2♣ must have at least one known suit.
  - c) opening bids of 2 or higher.
- 7. Numbers 4 through 8 under *RESPONSES AND REBIDS* above APPLY TO BOTH PAIRS.

### **DISALLOWED**

- 1. Conventions and/or agreements whose primary purpose is to destroy the opponents' methods.
- 2. Psyching of artificial or conventional opening bids and/or conventional responses thereto. Psyching conventional suit responses, **at the one or two level**, to natural openings.
- 3. Psychic controls (Includes ANY partnership agreement which, if used in conjunction with a psychic call, makes allowance for that psych.)
- 4. Forcing pass systems.
- 5. Relay (tell me more) systems.
- 6. Opening one bids which by partnership agreement could show less than 8 HCP. (Not applicable to a psych.)
- 7. CONVENTIONAL RESPONSES, REBIDS AND A CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE TO AN OPPONENT'S CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE after natural notrump opening bids or overcalls with a lower limit of less than 10 HCP or with a range of greater than 5 HCP (including those that have two non-consecutive ranges) and weak two-bids which by partnership agreement are not within a range of 7 HCP and or do not show at least five cards in the suit.

### **CARDING**

*Dual-message carding strategies are not approved except on each defender's first discard. Except for the first discard, only right-side-up or upside-down card ordering strategies are approved. Encrypted signals are not approved. In addition, a pair may be prohibited from playing any method (such as suit preference systems at trick one), when they are deemed to be playing it in a manner which is not compatible with the maintenance of proper tempo (much like dual message signals). This decision may be appealed to the tournament committee.*

### **3. ACBL Mid-Chart**

This chart applies to:

1. All NABC+ events with no upper masterpoint restrictions played at an NABC.
2. All unrestricted Flight A regionally rated events at an NABC.
3. Any bracket of a bracketed KO at an NABC which contains no team with a bracket designator (average masterpoints of the entire team or top two players) of less than 1000 points.

This chart (or any part) may apply to any sectionally or regionally rated event or tournament at sponsor's option provided that this has been included in tournament advertising. (The requirement for advertising does not extend to use in Flt. A or high brackets of KOs.)

Pre-Alerts are required for all conventional methods not permitted on the ACBL General Convention Chart. A written description of, and suggested defenses to, those methods must be made available to opponents. **However, those methods designated by an asterisk (\*) do not require a written suggested defense.** A defense to a method which requires the above pre-Alert may be referred to during the auction by opponents of the convention user.

Pairs using a method permitted by the Mid-Chart and not noted by an asterisk must have available for the opponents the approved defense listed in the ACBL Defense Database which is available at or a hard copy may be purchased from the ACBL Sales Department (in the U.S. 1-800-264-2743; in Canada 1-800-264-8786).

A method may be approved experimentally for Mid-Chart events. In order to have a method approved experimentally, a complete description and suggested defense must be submitted to ACBL, attention Chief Tournament Director, by regular mail or e-mail to [chief.tournament.director@acbl.org](mailto:chief.tournament.director@acbl.org)

#### **ALLOWED**

*(Unless specifically allowed methods are disallowed)*

1. All of the ACBL General Convention Chart.
2. Relay (tell me more) systems that promise game-forcing values\*.
3. All other constructive rebids and responses are permitted, except for\*:
  - a. relay systems that show less than game-forcing values,
  - b. conventional calls after natural notrump opening bids or overcalls having a lower limit of less than 10 HCP or with a range of greater than 5 HCP (*see #9 under RESPONSES AND REBIDS and #7 under DISALLOWED on the General Convention Chart*) - however, this prohibition does not extend to notrumps that have two non-consecutive ranges neither of which exceeds 3 HCP, and

- c. conventional calls after a weak two-bid with an agreed range of more than 7 HCP or an agreement where the suit length may be four cards (*see #6 under RESPONSES AND REBIDS and #7 under DISALLOWED on the General Convention Chart*).

THIS APPLIES TO BOTH PAIRS.

4. Any call that promises four or more cards in a known suit.  
(See items #6 and #8 in DISALLOWED below.)
5. Opening 2 showing a weak two-bid in an unspecified major and may include additional strong (15+ HCP) meaning(s).
6. A 2♣ or 2NT opening bid showing an unspecified minor or both minors.
7. Any strong (15+ HCP) opening bid.
8. Notrump overcall as a two-suit takeout showing at least 5-4 distribution.
9. \*Defenses to natural notrump opening bids and overcalls.
10. Any opening bid at the three level or higher showing an undisclosed solid suit.

### **DISALLOWED**

1. Conventions and/or agreements whose primary purpose is to destroy the opponents' methods.
2. Psyching of artificial opening bids and/or conventional responses thereto.
3. Psychic controls. (Includes ANY partnership agreement which, if used in conjunction with a psychic call, makes allowance for that psych.)
4. Forcing pass systems.
5. Relay (tell me more) systems except those that are game-forcing.
6. Opening one-bids which by partnership agreement could show less than 8 HCP. (Not applicable to a psych.)
7. Psyching a conventional agreement which may show less than 10 HCP and which is not permitted by the General Convention Chart. This includes psyching responses to or rebids of these methods.
8. Any weak opening bid which promises an unknown suit may not include as the unknown suit the suit named (the suit opened).

### **CARDING**

Same as listed on the General Convention Chart.

## **4. ACBL Super-Chart**

This chart applies to all NABC+ events with no upper masterpoint limit played at an NABC in which contestants play segments (no change of opponents) of 12 or more

boards. This chart (or any part) may be used at a sectionally- or regionally-rated event or tournament at sponsor's option in any event with 12-board or longer segments provided this has been included in tournament advertising.

Pre-Alerts are required for all conventional methods not permitted on the ACBL General Convention Chart. Description of, and suggested defenses to, such methods must be made in writing. A defense to a method which requires the above pre-Alert may be referred to during the auction by opponents of the convention user.

For NABC+ events in which this chart is permitted, pairs playing SuperChart methods must furnish the above descriptions of their methods to the Director-in-Charge of the event the day prior to the session in which they choose to play them.

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### **ALLOWED**

*Unless specifically allowed methods are disallowed*

All of the ACBL Mid-Chart plus any other non-destructive convention, treatment or method except that:

1. Artificial weak bids at the two or three level (including those with strong adjuncts) must possess:
  - a. a known suit, or
  - b. one of no more than two possible suits not to include the suit bid.
2. Defenses over opponents' natural suit bids must promise:
  - a. for non-cuebids showing a single-suited hand, one of no more than two possible suits
  - b. a cuebid which could show a weak hand with four plus cards in the suit bid must promise four plus cards in another known suit.
3. The prohibitions contained in item #9 under RESPONSES AND REBIDS on the General Convention Chart are effective for this Chart. (However, this prohibition does not extend to notrumps that have two non-consecutive ranges neither of which exceeds 3 HCP.)

### **DISALLOWED**

1. Conventions and/or agreements whose primary purpose is to destroy the opponents' methods.
2. Psyching of artificial opening bids and/or conventional responses thereto.
3. Psychic controls. (Includes ANY partnership agreement which, if used in conjunction with a psychic call, makes allowance for that psych.)
4. Forcing pass systems.
5. Opening one bids which by partnership agreement could show fewer than 8 HCP. (Not applicable to a psych.)

6. Psyching a conventional agreement which may show fewer than 10 HCP and which is not permitted by the General Convention Chart. This includes psyching responses to or rebids of those methods.

**CARDING**

Same as listed on the General Convention Chart.

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