

TNBA Systems policy and guidelines

This document outlines TNBA systems policy and in particular lays down broad parameters for certain common bids/sequences. Further, the document attempts to define what a psyche is and what actions are permissible under different scenarios. **Please note these guidelines apply only to local and regional tournaments run under the auspices of the TNBA and not to zonal/national level tournaments**

General system policy

- Events and tournaments conducted under the auspices of the TNBA will follow these broad general guidelines **in conjunction with BFI systems policy** to determine acceptable actions at the table
- Note that any bids or calls made that fall outside of these parameters may be determined to be a “psyche”, and without proper pre-alerts or explanations, are liable to be penalised
- Players found to be repeatedly taking such actions may be pulled up for disciplinary action
- Note that this document doesn't prohibit players from defining systems outside of these guidelines - such systems are allowed with the proviso that the exceptional bids and sequences are pre-alerted to the opponents. The fundamental purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that players disclose their agreements fully and that players at all levels are able to understand and handle unusual systems and conventions with comfort and confidence
- Strongly artificial systems such as **Brown sticker conventions and HUM (Highly unusual methods) systems are expressly forbidden**
- The following sections outline specific areas of bidding and the guidelines thereof. In addition, the document also lays out protocols for online play, alerts & explanations & director calls

Opening bids

- Players are allowed to upgrade their hands based on extra distribution, but all opening bids must comply with minimum high card strength, as described in the following points
- Opening bids should follow normal standards applicable in most bidding systems. The minimum requirement for opening bids (without pre-alerts) is approximately 10 hcp. A certain latitude is permitted, based on vulnerability, position and distributional strength. However, opening bids in any seat that fall below 8 hcp will require a pre-alert/announcement (please see section on pre-alerts)
- A 1NT opening bid normally shows a balanced hand in the 15-17 range. If you play a different range, or open with unbalanced hands (the exception is with singleton Aces, Kings or Queen) or discretionally adjust the range upwards or downwards, this needs to be pre-alerted and/or announced. A NT opening with a maximum range of 5 HCP will be allowed.
- Strong and artificial opening bids should conform to certain minimum high card strength standards. A Precision 1C opening (normally 16+ points) should contain at least 13 high card points however matching Rule of 24. A standard 2c opening (normally 22+ points) should contain at least 15 hcp however matching Rule of 24.

First response

- A normal responding hand in most systems is worth about 5-6 hcp. In standard methods, it is often considered prudent to respond with an Ace, even without other values. System agreements that fall below these standards come within the ambit of pre-alerts/announcements. Obvious exceptions are responses to NT openings which can be made with very weak hands and tactical responses with long suits and shortness in opener's suit

Overcalls

- A standard 1 level overcall (whether over a suit opening or a NT opening) should have a minimum hcp content of about 8 hcp. Some leeway is allowed for additional distribution and/or suit quality. A 1-level overcall that is made on 5 hcp or fewer will require a pre-alert or announcement. Note that this does not apply to overcalls of a strong artificial 1-level opening bid (like Precision 1♣)
- A 2 level non-jump overcall is typically made on opening hand values. Again, there is flexibility here based on distributional values. A system that prescribes a natural 2 level overcall made on fewer than 9 hcp will require to be announced or pre-alerted to the opponents. Against a strong NT opening (15-17 or 16-18), overcalls are permitted on hands less than the above prescribed.

Pre-empts

- A 2-level pre-emptive opening or overcall can be made on 5 hcp or more
- A 3-level pre-emptive opening or overcall can be made on 4 hcp or more

Psyches

- A psyche is defined as a gross violation of normal bidding practice with the intent to deceive the opponents. Examples include opening bids on fewer than 8 hcp and bidding non-suits naturally. Psyches of artificial bids are prohibited in all tournaments. The director will determine if a particular bid is a psyche based on context and player/partnership history. The Psyche policy for Category 3 events as per BFI policy would be followed in general except when explicitly specified

Pre-alerts and announcements

- Any system agreements or tendencies outside of the bounds of the above definitions should be fully disclosed to the opponents either before the match/round is scheduled to begin or, if time/logistics do not permit, at the time of such calls that deviate from the defined/accepted norms
- This applies to well-discussed system agreements as well as any partnership or individual tendencies. For example, if a player is known to open in 3rd seat with 7 hcp or fewer for lead-direction and partner is aware of this tendency, then that constitutes a partnership understanding and the partnership must pre-alert their opponents. Note that even a few instances of these occurrences can be construed as a partnership agreement. Be fair and fully disclose your agreements and understandings
- In cases where pre-alerts are not possible or practical, the bidder and his/her partner must alert their opponents at the time of their bid. This is particularly applicable in online events where it is possible to alert opponents without conveying information to partner

Online etiquette

- Etiquette in online bridge is not that different from that in live bridge. Since no one can see their opponents/partner, it behoves us to be even more courteous and polite to all involved. The guidelines here are in addition to those laid out in the TNBA Ethics and Etiquette document
- Greet your opponents and briefly describe your basic system and any special agreements (pre-alerts) when they arrive at the table
- If you step away from your computer for any length of time, inform everyone at the table about it before you do. “Be right back” or “brb” or “stepping away for 2 mins” are all appropriate
- If your opponent or partner loses their connection, be patient and wait for a few minutes. Normal waiting period is up to 3 minutes. Beyond that, request the director’s help
- If you are hosting a team match, make sure to add the director(s) per the tourney requirements
- Undo’s are not allowed in many events. Where the tournament organizer has permitted undo’s, they are applicable only for unintended actions, such as mis-clicks. Even in these cases, it’s not incumbent upon the opponents to grant the Undo – request one politely and most opponents will oblige. Do not request an undo if you’ve made an unthinking bid or play and you would like to correct it
- As in live bridge, be sure of the validity of your claim before you proceed to make one

Alerts and explanations

- Alert all artificial calls made by yourself/partner. In BBO, it’s easy to alert and explain any bids made by yourself or your partner without conveying unauthorized information to partner (UI)
- Fully explain the meaning of any calls which are not obvious, even before your opponents ask for it. Enter your explanation in the area provided before making your bid – this will convey both the alert and the explanation to your opponents before their turn to bid
- Avoid using vague phrases such as “Balancing”, “Cue-bid”, “Inverted minor” or “Prepared”. Instead, try to explain the meaning of your bid fully – “11-14 hcp, balanced”, “shows a control in the bid suit”, “11+ hcp with a fit for partner’s suit”, “2+ diamonds, 11-15” are much more meaningful and appropriate. When asked for an explanation, provide a complete answer in the interest of **full disclosure**
- When requesting/offering explanations, use the options to only speak to one or both of the opponents. It’s every player’s responsibility to understand how the platform works and use it to best advantage. If you don’t know how to do a specific thing, ask one of your friends or read the manual
- Be polite when requesting an explanation – don’t be rude or demanding. If someone doesn’t respond immediately, they may be away from their keyboard or they may not have seen your message. Wait for a few seconds and make another request. If they still don’t respond, it is acceptable to address them in table chat and ask for a response. If they still don’t respond, call the director
- Players are within their rights to pause bidding or play while they wait for their queries to be answered. If this is taking an unusually long time, inform the table why there is a hold-up

Disputes and director calls

- In case of dispute, never get into an argument with your opponents. Avoid table chat and request the director's presence at your table immediately via the Call director button or via phone. If immediate assistance is required, please let the director know that help is required with the **current board**
- If your subsequent action requires that the dispute be resolved, wait patiently for the director to arrive. Directors typically handle several tables and they may be occupied at another one
- If you are able to proceed without the director's immediate assistance, you may do so and inform the director about the problem when they arrive. This will ensure the smooth flow of the game
- If the director is not able to resolve the issue to your satisfaction, you are entitled to a review of the director's decision. Email the director within a few hours of the conclusion of the game, setting out your case in full. Include a screenshot of the deal in question as well as any other pertinent details. The director will perform a review, consulting senior directors and/or expert players and arrive at a final decision which they will communicate to you in writing
- If you are not satisfied with a director's rulings or performance, you have the right to reach out privately to the TNBA executive committee, requesting a further review
- Please do not abuse the privilege of a review by making trivial requests either to the director or to the TNBA executive committee. There need to be sufficient reasons to escalate to the director and/or to the executive committee. Frivolous requests for review will be denied and censured
- Refrain from posting issues/comments etc about specific deals/incidents in social media, including WhatsApp. These are not official forums for addressing complaints
- The directors are to be treated with courtesy, respect and consideration at all times. Disciplinary charges and penalties may be brought against any player who intimidates or abuses a director in private or public