



Conventional Wisdom - part 1

Each of the next several months we break down a section of the new ACBL convention card. See pages 18-19 of the March issue for the complete card and a glossary of terms and abbreviations.

OVERVIEW

The very first box is for the pair's general approach (Standard American, 2/1, Precision etc.), which is similar to the old card, but features a new line: **Min Expected HCP when Balanced**, with spaces to enter numbers for **Opening** and **Responding**. For example, if in your partnership you agree to open all balanced 12-counts and respond with a balanced hand with 6 HCP, then you would write 12 and 6 in the lines provided.

Notrump ranges considered "weak" can range anywhere from as few as 10 up to 15 HCP. Is 13-15 a weak notrump? That is up to your partnership as defenders to decide.

Some partnerships play weak notrump when nonvulnerable and strong when vulnerable, or in different seats (weak in first or second, strong in third and fourth). Checking this box is not meant to describe the variability, just to alert the opponents of its existence.

OVERVIEW

General Approach _____

Min Expected HCP when Balanced: Opening _____ Responding _____

Forcing Open: 1♣ ☐ 2♣ ☐ Other _____ 1NT Open: Str ☐ Wk ☐ Variable ☐

Bids That May Require Preparation _____

Next, we have **Forcing Open**, with the normal 1♣ and 2♣ options, plus **Other**.

There are boxes to check whether your 1NT openings are strong, weak or variable.

Strong generally includes any notrump range with 14 as its lowest possible.

Bids That May Require Preparation. Kind of like a "pre-Alert," this space is available for you to include artificial bids that your opponents may want to discuss their defense to in advance. A good example is Flannery, an opening bid of 2♦ which shows 11-15 HCP with five hearts and four spades. Again, there is room below to articulate your methods. This is just to summarize your system.

Indicate your agreed-upon **Minimum Length** by checking the appropriate box in the top row. The area for **Responses** has been expanded for you to detail your methods. The 1♦/1NT/2NT section is very similar to the old card.

MINORS

The areas for 1♣ and 1♦ have been separated. For most players, there may be no need to differentiate between their responses to 1♣ and 1♦. If that is the case, you can simply check the "Same as over 1♣" box in the 1♦ area.

With the popularity of strong club systems and "could be short" club openings, with or without transfer responses, the section for 1♣ opening bids has been expanded. There are several options to check to indicate your agreement about minimum expected length. As with the old card, bids in blue require an Announcement, bids in red require an Alert.

MINORS

1♣ Min Length: 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ NF 2 ☐ (4432 only) ☐ NF 1 ☐ NF 0 ☐ Art F ☐ Resp _____ Transfer Resp ☐

1♦ _____ Bypass 5+ ☐ Raises: Single: NF ☐ Inv+ ☐ GF ☐ Jump: Wk ☐ Mixed ☐ Inv ☐ After Overcall: Wk ☐ Mixed ☐ Inv ☐

1♦ Min Length: 5 ☐ 4 ☐ 3 ☐ Unbal ☐ NF 2 ☐ NF 1 ☐ NF 0 ☐ Art F ☐ Resp _____ Same as over 1♣ ☐

1NT _____ to _____ Raises: Single: NF ☐ Inv+ ☐ GF ☐ Jump: Wk ☐ Mixed ☐ Inv ☐ After Overcall: Wk ☐ Mixed ☐ Inv ☐

2NT _____ to _____

In the 1♦ section, in addition to the various options for minimum length, there is also an option to check that your 1♦ opening promises an unbalanced hand.

How does your partnership raise 1♣/1♦? Is a single raise invitational or better? Is it game forcing? What about jump raises? It is here that a new option for a jump raise of a suit debuts: the "mixed" raise. What is a mixed raise? It might be described as "single raise values with extra trump." Distribution is subjective, depending on a player's evaluation. For example, if balanced, they might have more toward the upper range of high-card points. If the hand contains shortness, perhaps fewer high-card points.

Lastly, there are three options for what a jump raise means after the opponents overcall.