



The Basics of a Bidding System

The purpose of bidding is for a partnership to reach contracts that are neither too high nor too low.

The method of allocating meaning to the various bids is called the System.

Bidding is NOT a private, coded conversation between partners.

Partners exchange information by their bids, but opponents are also entitled to know what these bids mean. It is normal in club play to exchange ‘system cards’ with your opponents, which contain information about the meaning of your bids, such as: “An opening bid of 1NT shows a balanced hand with 12-14 high card points”

Your bidding system must be based on a very limited number of calls: from 1♣ to 7NT, plus pass, double and redouble.

The art of bidding consists in using this limited vocabulary as efficiently as possible.

The Acol System

We will learn Acol, a system named after the Acol Road in London, which is still the most popular method in Great Britain. The system has developed over the years, and we will learn a modern version.

Note: we will not learn the exact meaning of every bid right away.

It is more important to grasp the logic behind each bid, so that we understand the reasons for choosing one bid rather than another

Limit Bids

Any bid with a narrowly defined point range is called a *limit bid*.

eg If we open 1NT we show 12, 13 or 14 points. So our hand is limited - it cannot be stronger or weaker
Similarly, if we respond 1NT to an opening bid of one of a suit we show 6-9 points, no more, no less

When partner has made a limit bid it is easy to work out whether we have enough values for game or not.

Within the range of a Limit Bid we talk about “minimum” and “maximum” hands.

A minimum 1NT opener has 12 points. A maximum has 14 points. With 13 points we are ‘not minimum’.

♠ AQJ83
♥ Q7
♦ AK65
♣ J4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K765
♥ K1043
♦ 98
♣ Q76

West
1♠
3♠
Pass

East
2♠
4♠

When East bids 2♠ West thinks “if East has 8 or 9 points we have enough for game”

So he *invites* game by bidding 3♠, which shows 16-17 points, enough for game if East is maximum.

East knows that if West had fewer points he would Pass, and with more he would bid game direct.

With 8 points rather than his minimum of 6 East bids game.