

Reasons to Play the Precision Club Bidding System and the Basics of the System

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The Precision Club bidding system was invented in the 1960s by C. C. Wei of Taiwan. The original objective of the system was to help the Taiwanese national team compete against expert bridge players from around the world. The system exceeded beyond everyone's expectations when the Taiwanese team scored success after success against many of the world's top tournament bridge players!

Why Play Precision Club?

- ***Better communication with your partner.*** Precision Club is a system designed to help bridge partners better describe their hands to one another. This helps to reduce the ambiguity that you find with the bids in many popular bidding systems. And, it helps you easily determine whether you should bid a game, a slam, or be satisfied with a part score.
- ***Easily understandable bids.*** As its name implies, the Precision Club system assigns very precise meanings to the bids you make. Most of the system's bids have a specific point count range and also provide information about your hand's distribution.
- ***Advantage over opponents.*** Most of today's tournament bridge players in the U.S. have adopted the two over one system of bidding. Many British players have adopted the ACOL system of bidding. Precision Club bidding is sufficiently different from these systems that it actually gives you an advantage over opponents who do not take the time to understand the meaning behind your bids.¹

My wife and I have played the Precision Club system for over 30 years because we were continually misunderstanding one another's bids in the systems we originally played. [We started out playing "Standard" or "Goren" bridge bidding and then shifted to the Kaplan-Sheinwold bidding system before finally settling on Precision Club.]

There are various versions of the Precision Club System that are currently being played. The system that we use is based upon the "Match Point Precision" system introduced by C. C. Wei and Ron Andersen in 1975. Our opinion is that the refinements made in Match Point Precision work very well in both match pointⁱⁱ and team games. This series of articles will cover the essentials of the system advocated by Wei and Andersen.

The Basics of the Precision Club System

The Precision 1♣ bid

Precision Club has exactly two "big" bids. One of those bids is 2 no-trump (NT) and the other is 1♣. The 2 NT bid is reserved for balanced hands that have specifically 22 or 23 high card points (HCP). All other hands that contain a minimum of 16 HCP are opened 1♣ regardless of the distribution. In the box below are some examples of hands from a recent

ACBLⁱⁱⁱ Sectional tournament that you would open 1♣:

Hands on which you would open a Precision 1♣ bid:			
1)	♠ 5 2	♥ K J 5	♦ A K ♣ K Q 10 7 4 2
2)	♠ A K Q 8 4	♥ Q 4 2	♦ K Q J 2 ♣ Q
3)	♠ A Q J 3	♥ Q	♦ A Q J 10 ♣ A J 6 5
4)	♠ A K Q 6	♥ A J	♦ K 7 5 3 ♣ 8 7 3
5)	♠ A Q 3	♥ A K Q	♦ A J 10 2 ♣ 10 5 3

Notice that each of the hands shown above have one thing in common: they all have at least 16 HCP.

In the popular two over one bidding system: hand number one would frequently be opened 1♣ (or possibly 1NT), hand two would usually be opened 1♠ in that system, and hand three would be opened 1♣ or 1♦ depending upon the partnership agreement about minor suit opening bids.

In many systems, hand four would be opened 1NT while hand five would be opened 2NT (or 1♦, depending upon the point range a partnership assigns to the 2NT opening bid).

You might ask, “what is so “precise” about the Precision 1♣ opening bid?” Obviously, there is a big range of hands that can be opened 1♣ in Precision. The major thing to understand is that it tells your partner that you have at least 16 HCP [note: you do not count distributional values in deciding whether to open a Precision 1♣ bid].

The opening 1♣ bid requires your partner to begin making bids that describe her hand. [The responses to the 1♣ opening will be discussed in the next installment of this series.]

It is necessary to “alert” the Precision 1♣ opening bid because it has a meaning that most systems do not assign to the bid. When we “alert” our 1♣ opening bid, we explain that it is “strong, artificial, and forcing;” then, if the opponents ask about point count, we explain that it is a minimum of 16 HCP. The bid does require your partner to bid if the opponent on your left does not overcall your 1♣ with a bid of his own.

The Precision 1♠ and 1♥ bids

Precision 1♠ and 1♥ bids are called limits bids. This is because they are both limited to 11-15 HCP. And, both bids promise a minimum of five cards in the bid suit. [Once again, you do not count distributional values in determining whether to open with 1♠ and 1♥ bids.] We will explain more about Precision 1♠ and 1♥ bids in a future article about these opening bids.

The Match Point Precision 1NT bid

The Match Point Precision 1NT is opened with specifically 13-15 HCP. The bid

requires a balanced hand (at least two cards in each suit). The Match Point bid differs slightly from the regular Precision 1NT. That difference is that you do not open 1NT if you have a four-card major suit; instead, you will open 1♦. The reasoning behind the prohibition on having a four-card major suit when you open 1NT will be explained in a future article about the Match Point Precision 1NT bid.

The Match Point Precision 2♣ bid

The Match Point Precision 2♣ is opened with 11-15 HCP. The bid requires a “good” club suit. A “good” club suit is defined as a minimum of five clubs with two of the top three honors [A, K, Q] or more than five clubs with at least one of the top three honors. The Match Point 2♣ bid differs from the regular Precision 2♣ bid in that it also denies a four-card major suit. Once again, the reasoning behind the prohibition on having a four-card major suit when you open 2♣ will be explained in a future article about the Match Point Precision 2♣ bid.

The Precision 2♦ bid

The Precision 2♦, like the Match Point Precision 2♣ bid, is opened with 11-15 HCP. However, that is where the similarity ends. This bid describes a hand that promises a void or singleton in diamonds. We will learn more about the 2♦ opening bid in a future article about the Precision 2♦ bid.

The Precision 2♠ and 2♥ bids

The Precision 2♠ and 2♥ bids are “weak” bids. The way we play these bids, they promise 6-10 or 8-10 HCP (depending upon the vulnerability) and six-cards in the bid suit. These bids and other preemptive bids will be discussed in a future article on Precision preemptive bidding.

The Precision 1♦ bid

The Precision 1♦ bid is another limit bid. It also promises 11-15 HCP. However, it can be of almost any distribution. Because we cannot open the Match Point 1NT or 2♣ bids with a four-card major, this bid often has a four-card major. However, that is not always the case. We will examine the Precision 1♦ bid more thoroughly in a future article.

Practice Your Opening Precision Bids

Take a deck of regular playing cards and remove all of the twos, threes, fours, and fives. Now, deal three hands of 13 cards each. With all of the small cards removed, you should have several hands that you can use to practice the openings bids that have been described above.

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Endnotes are on the next page

- i Tournament bridge is a very ethical game and you are required to “alert” the bids you make that do not have the “standard” meanings. After you alert your partner's bid, when it is an opponent's turn to bid, she may ask you to explain the meaning of your partner's bid. You must give the opponent an honest answer about the bid's meaning. However, many players will not bother to ask you about your bids. This gives you an advantage if they don't want to take the time to find out what the Precision Club bid means. Of course, you should also ask your opponents what their alerted bids mean unless you fully understand the meaning of their bids. Keep in mind that you can always wait until the auction has ended to ask about the meaning of your opponents' bids (I often prefer this option as it keeps an opponent from accidentally informing her partner about a potential partnership misunderstanding). If you wait until after the auction to ask about an alerted bid, you must do so either before you lead when you are the person making the opening lead. If your partner is to make the opening lead, you may ask for an explanation of an alerted bid (a) after your partner has made a face down lead and asks you “any questions” or (b) when it is your turn to play if your partner made a face up lead.
- ii “Match Point” is a method of scoring in duplicate bridge pairs game. See the Wikipedia free on-line encyclopedia for a more complete explanation or matchpoint scoring: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duplicate_bridge#Matchpoint_scoring
- iii ACBL is the acronym for the American Contract Bridge League. For more information about the ACBL, see the links page at http://usabridge.com/html/bridge_links.html for links to several ACBL web site pages.