

Pre-empts (for Pre-emptive Bid)

It's OK to Go Down

You may remember from last week's lesson and notes that sometimes it is better to be in contract and not make it than for the opponents to be in a contract and make it. So, for example, 2♥ making 8 tricks scores +110 for them (so -110 for you), whereas 2♠ making only 7 tricks scores -50 for you (so +50 for them).

This is one of the reasons we bid competitively, even if we don't think we'll make our contract.

Pre-empts

Pre-empts are best described as getting your competing bid in first. Instead of waiting for opponents to open, you bid your suit, thus removing bidding space from them.

Benji Acol has two types of pre-empt, weak 2s and weak 3s.

Weak 2s

Weak 2s are for hands which have a long major suit – hearts or spades. The criteria for them are quite strict – exactly 6 cards in the suit and 6-10 points. (2C and 2D are reserved for different types of bid that we will meet later).

Weak 3s

Weak 3s are for hands which have a 7 (or more) card suit, and few points. The suit can be any of the four suits.

The point count will depend on a number of things. As a general rule you should be looking at 3-7 points, but there are factors you should take into account:

- Pre-empts are an attempt to stop the opposition finding a game contract. If they look unlikely to be in game, don't bid it.
- Vulnerability: if it is adverse (them green, us red) you need to be stronger, where as if it is favourable (them red, us green) you can be weaker.
- Defensive Value: How many defensive tricks does your hand have? 10 hearts to the AKQ is great in hearts, but fairly useless for defence, taking one trick at the most. The less defensive value your hand has, the weaker you can bid a pre-empt.
- Shape of the hand: a 7-6-0-0 hand is far more powerful than a 7-2-2-2 hand.

Weak 4s

Weak 4s are just an extension of weak 3s, but bid on a hand that has little defensive value but a slim chance of making 10 tricks. They are usually only used in the majors (because the gain of the game bonus makes it worth the risk of a large negative score). Typically such a hand will have an 8 card suit and be shapely.