

COMPARING ACOL AND STANDARD AMERICAN

With the arrival of Andy Hung we are switching to teaching Standard American. Is this such a big deal? Not really, as the 2 systems have much in common and only a few minor differences. It is easy to adapt once you've already learnt a bidding system.

We have been toying with this change for some time as Standard has become the international system of choice, largely influenced by the rise of the internet. It will also make for more consistency across Australia, as Standard is common elsewhere. Another benefit is that Standard provides a good platform for switching to Two-Over-One at some stage, if you wish.

However, there is nothing wrong with continuing to play Acol if you prefer.

What are the differences?

FIVE CARD MAJORS

Whereas Acol plays 4 card majors, in Standard an opening bid of 1 of a major promises at least a 5 card suit. So you can support a major immediately with just 3 card support if you wish.

An upshot of playing 5 card majors is that a minor suit opening is occasionally 3 when lacking a 5 card major, although you needn't make adjustments to accommodate this.

STRONG NO TRUMP

Whereas Acol plays a weak no trump (12-14), a 1NT opening in Standard shows 15-17. In general, the hands where you would *open* 1NT in one system become a 1NT *rebid* in the other. Similarly, hands where you would *rebid* 1NT are flipped to a 1NT *opening* in the other.

Examples when playing Standard

♠ 10 9

♥ A Q 8 3

♦ J 3 2

♣ A J 4 2

Open 1♣. Then rebid 1NT over a 1♠ response.

With one fewer club and one more spade still open 1♣.

♠ A Q 9 8

♥ J 9

♦ K 3 2

♣ A Q 7 4

Open 1NT.

With one fewer club and one more spade still open 1NT, which may include a 5 card major.